



# Lan-Oak Park District Master Plan Existing Conditions Report



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# Introduction

The Lan-Oak Park District's current Master Plan was completed in 1994. Over the last 20 years the District has experienced significant changes and currently faces many challenges ahead. The District is essentially landlocked, with very few dollars available to make capital improvements. Many of the District's existing parks are in need of improvements and some facilities, such as the District's only outdoor community pool, have been closed.

The Master Plan will involve input from district staff, elected and appointed officials, residents, and sports groups/affiliates throughout the planning process. An updated Master Plan will provide the District with an up-to-date road map for how to best provide parks and recreation in Lansing over the next 10-15 years.

## Purpose of the Master Plan

The combination of the financial health of the Park District and the constantly changing trends in parks and recreation create a need for the Lan-Oak Park District to develop an appropriate and effective plan. To be an asset for the District, the plan must address the current issues and concerns of the community. Once completed, the Plan will be a tremendous asset for the District as it pursues grant opportunities.

The Master Plan will align park services with community needs. It will establish strategies for actions to address community issues and concerns. Having an accurate understanding of the existing conditions in the Park District is the first step in developing the Master Plan.

The key goals for the updated Master Plan are that it:

1. Updates the current Park Master Plan and includes relevant recommendations concerning parks and open space.
2. Builds upon the existing parks and open space to make recommendations for park acquisition, capital improvements, and potential sale or removal of underutilized or unnecessary park sites based upon staff and community input and parkland acreage analysis.
3. Identifies the importance of parks and recreation in the community including the connection between parks and health.
4. Identifies the importance of parks and recreation in connection with economic value, stability and growth of the community.
5. Provides recommendations to assist the Village in rejuvenating downtown Lansing with Park Plaza as an anchor.
6. Explores the expansion of the District's service area.
7. Recommends connections between Pennsy Greenway and the community.
8. Develops an implementation strategy.

**Figure 1: Lan-Oak Park District**

## **Planning Process and Timeline**

The planning process consists of multiple steps that have been designed to be completed in 12 months. Over the last five months, the process has included extensive community input through a series of focus groups, key-person interviews, surveys, public meetings, and a series of technical analyses and assessments. In addition, previous plans, studies and reports have been reviewed including the *1994 Park Master Plan*, the *Capital Improvement Plan*, and the *Village of Lansing's Draft 2014 Comprehensive Plan*.

The planning process has been crafted with assistance from the Lan-Oak Park District staff, and guidance from the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and Cook County Department of Public Health. It is designed to include the input of Lansing residents, business owners, senior groups, school administrators and other stakeholders.

**Figure 2: Planning Process and Timeline**

## **Organization of the Existing Conditions Report**

This Existing Conditions Report—representing the accumulation of six months of research, analysis, and public outreach activities—provides an overview of the current conditions in the Park District. It is designed to provide an agreed upon “starting point” by which to move forward and create a shared vision for the Park District.

The Existing Conditions Report is organized into the following sections:

- Introduction
- Section 1: History and Regional Context
- Section 2: Summary of Background Studies, Reports, and Plans
- Section 3: Demographics
- Section 4: Community Outreach
- Section 5: Governance
- Section 6: Existing Conditions
- Section 7: Benefits
- Section 8: Moving Forward
- Appendix

### **Next Steps**

After presenting the Existing Conditions Report to the Steering Committee, CMAP staff will work with the Park District and key project partners such as the Village of Lansing, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and the Cook County Department of Public Health to draft a preliminary recommendations memo. The memo will outline the main concepts for the Master Plan moving forward. The recommendation memo will be presented to the Steering Committee

for discussion and approval. Upon approval, CMAP will begin to draft the Master Plan based upon the agreed upon recommendations.

# Section 1: History and Regional Context

This section provides an overview of the history of the Lan-Oak Park District and its relationship with the Village of Lansing and the larger Chicago region. Understanding the community's past and its regional position, especially with regard to its commercial and business areas, aids in both the understanding of existing conditions and in identifying potential opportunities or issues.

## History

The Village of Lansing and the Lan-Oak Park District both have a long history of offering sports and recreation in the community. For example, in 1894 the village had its first organized baseball team, the Lansing Red Hots. Other sports teams from the past include the Kindt's Colts (1916), the Lansing Greys (1920's), the Brickyard Teams (1920's), and the Lansing Athletics Club Ward's Indians (1930's). The Lansing Old Timers, a volunteer organization, which still runs the community's baseball program, was organized in 1944.

### ***Creation of the Park District***

The Park District was established in April 1949 after the then Mayor of Lansing, George Jones, and a few residents circulated a petition to establish a Park District.<sup>1</sup> Their vision was to have a place where people could relax, have a picnic, and enjoy the summer months.

A contest was organized for Lansing's schoolchildren to name the new park district. Two first-graders at Calvin Coolidge Elementary School happened to submit the same name – Lan-Oak Park District, in honor of two settlements, Lansing and Oak Glen, which today comprise the Village of Lansing. Oak Glen occupied the western part of the Village while Lansing settlement occupied the eastern part. Their entries won and they were both rewarded with a \$25 savings bond.<sup>2</sup>

### ***1950's***

Following the creation of the Lan-Oak Park District, a Board of Commissioners was elected. The board, consisting of five commissioners, hired George Molenhouse to be the first superintendent of the Park District, a position he held from 1951 until his death in 1973. Molenhouse oversaw the development of most of the original parks in Lansing, which were mostly acquired through donations and leases. He founded the Lansing's Molenhouse Zoo in 1970, which only existed for a few years. Molenhouse Zoo was located at the intersection of Chicago Avenue and 175th Street in Bock Park.<sup>3</sup> The zoo housed over 50 animals during its

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<sup>1</sup> Committee on Lansing Centennial, "Lansing Centennial Album", Lansing Historical Society, 1993.

<sup>2</sup>Pam Jiranek, "Lansing Centennial. History of Lan Oak Park". Published on nwi.com, March 30 1993. See: [http://www.nwitimes.com/uncategorized/lansing-centennial-history-of-lan-oak-park/article\\_cb467f42-e96e-50a3-9755-7b47d5e5c8d0.html](http://www.nwitimes.com/uncategorized/lansing-centennial-history-of-lan-oak-park/article_cb467f42-e96e-50a3-9755-7b47d5e5c8d0.html)

<sup>3</sup> Joan Carreon, "Students from TF South turn up Lansing." Published on nwi.com, January 11, 1993. See: [http://www.nwitimes.com/uncategorized/students-from-tf-south-turn-up-lansing/article\\_83a70a56-2551-50a1-81be-18275ba00c83.html](http://www.nwitimes.com/uncategorized/students-from-tf-south-turn-up-lansing/article_83a70a56-2551-50a1-81be-18275ba00c83.html).

brief existence. Following the death of George Molenhouse in January 1973, residents unsuccessfully tried to save the zoo. At that time no group or entity was willing to take over the zoo operations and maintenance. In November 1974, the park board voted to close the zoo.

Lan-Oak Park located at 178th Street and Oakley Avenue was the first park site in Lansing. The 20-acre park was dedicated by George Schultz, Walter Schultz, and Gus Bock in 1949. Over the next decade, Lan-Oak Park District acquired land both north and south of Lan-Oak Park and developed several parks, including Winterhoff, Schultz, Lion's, Potts, and Bock.

### **1960's**

The Park District established a series of smaller parks in the 1960s including Bernice Park, Kiwanis Park, Veterans Park, Flanagin Park, Oakley Park, and Oakwood Park. In an effort to modernize Lan-Oak Park, a pool was constructed after a special election in 1961, in which sixty percent of Lansing voters supported the addition. The pool was constructed on a piece of land that the Park District purchased from a subsidiary of Nagle Packing. The land acquisition and subsequent construction of the pool cost \$290,000, paid through a 20-year bond issue. During the winter, the pool parking lots and the tennis courts at Lan-Oak Park were turned into skating rinks.

### **1970's**

In the 1970s, the Park District focused on developing its sports programs and modernizing existing park facilities. In 1976, the Park District entered into a lease with the Village for a parcel on Chicago Avenue to construct a sports complex. The complex was initially known as the McNary Sports Complex but was later renamed to the Old Timers Sports Complex. Today, the Old Timers Sports Complex hosts a large number of youth baseball and softball programs.

In 1978, the Park District built an administrative office and a new maintenance facility down the street from the complex, at 17551 Chicago Avenue. In 1979 and 1980, the Park District renovated and modernized the pool and bathhouse for approximately \$1 million.

### **1980's**

After School District #158 closed down Eisenhower School (2550 178th Street) the Park District began to use the facility to hold recreational classes and programs. In 1983, the Park District purchased the school and turned it into a community center. In 1985, the Park District remodeled the school and added a new front entry, administrative offices, showers and lockers and a double gymnasium. The school was renamed 'Eisenhower Center'.

### **1990's**

In the 1990's the Park District focused on several capital improvement to its existing park facilities. In 1992, the Park District *spent over \$1 million to modernize and expand the Eisenhower Center*. Improvements included the addition of 16,500 square feet of new recreational space that included a lap pool, showers, locker rooms and fitness rooms.

## **2000's to today**

The Park District continues to provide a variety of programming and recreational opportunities throughout its parks and within the Eisenhower Center. The Lan-Oak Park District is a member of the South Suburban Special Recreation Association (SSSRA), a therapeutic recreation program for individuals with disabilities or special needs. The SSSRA was organized in 1973 to provide individuals with disabilities or special needs the opportunity to be involved in year-round recreation. Its members include eight park districts and three recreation and parks departments in the South suburbs.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of Lansing residents have reasonable access to parks, many of which have playgrounds, sports field, picnic areas and other recreational facilities. However, most of the parks are in a state of disrepair and some are in very poor condition. Unfortunately, the District does not have the funding to undertake many of the necessary capital improvements. Less than three percent of the property taxes levied in the Village support the Park District.

In the early 2000's the Park District led the effort to acquire the vacant Pennsylvania Railroad. The acquisition by the Village of Lansing (the Park District wrote the acquisition grant to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources on the Village's behalf) led to the development of the Pennsy Greenway. The development of the Pennsy Greenway was started by the Lan-Oak Park District with funding assistance provided by a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) grant. The Illinois portion of the trail in Lansing was completed in 2008 while the Indiana connection was completed in 2013.

In April 2013, Lansing residents narrowly rejected a referendum that would have increased property taxes in the Village to fund capital improvements in the Park District. The referendum, which lost by a very narrow margin (97 votes), would have increased property tax levy by ten cents to raise money to pay for the long overdue improvements to the local parks. Residents also voted down the referendum in 2008, 2009 and 2011.<sup>5</sup>

Last year, the Park District added a new boiler for the spa and remodeled the bathrooms at the Eisenhower Center, which provides year-round indoor recreation programs. The Park District also constructed new bleachers and pathways at Lion's Stadium.

## **Lan-Oak Park District Mission**

The mission of the Park District is *"to enhance the quality of life for all the Village residents by providing clean, safe parks, well-developed recreational facilities in a wide range of recreational programs and activities for all ages."*

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sssra.org/include/SSSRABrochure.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The Northwest Indian Times, "Lansing voters narrowly reject Park District referendum", April 10, 2013

See: [http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/elections/lansing-voters-narrowly-reject-park-district-referendum/article\\_199de3d3-dc26-5161-b10f-d571aff12148.html](http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/elections/lansing-voters-narrowly-reject-park-district-referendum/article_199de3d3-dc26-5161-b10f-d571aff12148.html)

## Regional Setting

The Lan-Oak Park District is located 27 miles south of Chicago’s Loop. The park district shares the same taxing boundary as the Village of Lansing and covers approximately 7 square miles.

Figure 1.1: Regional Setting

## Relationship with the GO TO 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan

The Lan-Oak Park District influences and is influenced by the larger Chicago metropolitan region. CMAP developed and now guides the implementation of GO TO 2040, metropolitan Chicago’s first truly comprehensive regional plan in more than 100 years. To address the anticipated population growth of more than 2 million new residents, GO TO 2040 establishes coordinated strategies that will help the region’s 284 communities address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality of life issues. The Plan contains 4 themes and 12 major recommendation areas:

### Livable communities

1. Achieve greater livability through land use and housing
2. Manage and conserve water and energy resources
3. Expand and improve parks and open space
4. Promote sustainable local food

### Human capital

1. Improve education and workforce development
2. Support economic innovation

### Efficient governance

1. Reform state and local tax policy
2. Improve access to information
3. Pursue coordinated investments

### Regional mobility

1. Invest strategically in transportation
2. Increase commitment to public transit
3. Create a more efficient freight network

Expanding and improving parks and open space is one of the four recommendations within the Livable Communities theme. GO TO 2040 states, “green spaces contribute to our personal well-being and regional economy. Access to parks and open space improves the health of our region’s residents and the value of their homes.” Through coordinated investments, existing land and water corridors are recommended to be preserved, and new ones created. GO TO 2040 recommends that the region make significant, criteria-based investments in parks and open space – providing more parks in developed areas, preserving the region’s most important natural areas, and providing functional connections between parks and preserves by using the green infrastructure network as a design concept. Park Districts play an important role in implementing these recommendations. The new Park Master Plan will assist the Lan-Oak Park

District in achieving its goals of preserving and maintaining existing open space which in turn supports the regional objectives.

## Section 2: Summary of Background Studies, Reports, and Plans

This section provides a summary of existing plans, studies, and reports that help to inform and affect the recommendations of the Master Plan. The Park District's previously prepared documents as well as the Village of Lansing's Draft 2014 Comprehensive Plan have been reviewed in order to help strengthen the project team's understanding of past and current plans dealing with parks and open space in the community.

The District's current Master Plan was created twenty years ago (1994) and is not summarized in this section because it is so out-of-date. The following documents have been reviewed and are presented in this section:

- Village of Lansing Draft Comprehensive Plan (Draft 2014)
- Forest Preserve District of Cook County Plans (2014)
- Millennium Reserve (2011)
- Lan-Oak Park District Bicycle Master Plan (2009)
- Park Plaza Concept Plan (Revised 2007)

### Village of Lansing Comprehensive Plan (*Draft 2014*)

*Prepared by Houseal Lavigne Associates with funding provided by CMAP*

*Draft Plan January 2014*

The Village's new Comprehensive Plan is its official policy guide for physical improvement and development. It considers not only the immediate needs and concerns of the Village, but also improvements and development over the next 10-15 years and beyond. The Comprehensive Plan will assist the Village in preserving and protecting important existing features and resources, coordinating new growth and development, and establishing a strong, positive community image and identity.

A representative from the Lan-Oak Park District, John Wilson, was part of the steering committee that assisted in the development of the Village's plan. Having a representative from the park district on the steering committee was a benefit for the district, the village and the entire community. His knowledge of the Village's process and plan recommendations will help to strengthen the Lan-Oak Park District Master Plan and provide insight into potential partnership opportunities.

#### ***Parks and Recreation Recommendations***

The Objectives, Policies, and Recommendations in the Parks, Open Space, and Environmental Features Plan are intended to:

- Promote cooperation with the Lan-Oak Park District & Forest Preserve District of Cook County.
- Help to ensure parks and recreation areas are well maintained.
- Provide and expand physical connections to the community's open space system.

- Protect and enhance the community’s high-quality natural features.
- Mitigate flooding.
- Reduce noise and light pollution.

Building upon those key goals, the following are the Village’s recommendations for parks and open space in Lansing:

- Support the Lan-Oak Park District’s mission to provide residents with safe and convenient access to well-maintained and adequate parks and recreation throughout the Village.
- Support the implementation of Lan-Oak Park District’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Identify surplus parcels or areas of Village owned land that could be leased to the Lan-Oak Park District for recreational uses such as plazas or splash pads.
- Work with the Lan-Oak Park District to identify opportunities to provide park sites in underserved areas, including the conversion of vacant lots and other underutilized parcels to parks and open space.
- Coordinate with the Lan-Oak Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to strengthen connections to regional parks and preserves.
- Coordinate with the Lan-Oak Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to provide wayfinding through the Village, directing motorists along arterial and collector streets to regional parks and preserves.
- Work cooperatively with the Lan-Oak Park District to host neighborhood and community group events at park facilities. *(the July 4<sup>th</sup> event is currently the only cooperative event held between the two groups.)*
- Work with the Lan-Oak Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to strengthen and expand recreational amenities at regional parks and preserves.
- Support the continued improvement of Forest Preserve District of Cook County land around the Village.

### **Park Maintenance**

Feedback collected from public outreach indicated that while residential neighborhoods have reasonable access to parks, citizens were concerned with the level of maintenance at Village parks. The Village can assist Lan- Oak Park District through the following actions:

- Work with residents and the Lan-Oak Park District to develop a prioritized list of problematic parks and maintenance issues, such as the former public pool, where increased maintenance or redevelopment would have the largest benefit for all of Lansing.
- Where appropriate, continue to assist the Lan-Oak Park District in park maintenance and improvement projects.

### **Physical Connections and Access**

The Village can promote active lifestyles by creating a comprehensive trails network to access existing parks, open space preserves, and trails. Consideration should be given to establishing

connections to future parks and recreational areas, as presented in the Lan-Oak Park District's Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Village should consider the following:

- Work with the ComEd to utilize their north-south power line easement as an opportunity to expand trails and a greenbelt network throughout Lansing, from I-94 to Lansing Woods.
- Work with ComEd and the railroad to utilize their east-west power line easement and vacant railroad property as a trail connection from Wentworth Avenue to Lansing Woods.
- Consider existing road right-of-way, Village owned property, parks, forest preserves and other areas as opportunities to link together the Village's open space network and connect schools, commercial areas, neighborhoods, and other destinations.
- Complete "gaps" in the Village's sidewalk network, prioritizing existing Village neighborhoods that lack complete pedestrian infrastructure that frustrate safe and convenient access to local parks.

**Figure 2.1: Parks and Recreation Plan from the Village's Draft Comprehensive Plan**

## **Forest Preserve District of Cook County**

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County has completed a number of plans in recent years to assist in making operational and capital improvement decisions. The Forest Preserve is also currently working on a number of other plans that will impact preserves near the Lan-Oak Park District. The following section highlights the most recent plans completed by the Preserve and the recommendations that most closely affect the Lansing community.

### **Recreation Master Plan**

*Created in 2013*

The Forest Preserve's Recreation Master Plan was created in 2013 to establish a vision and set of realistic strategies to guide development of outdoor recreation within the preserves for the next 5-10 years. Its goals are to introduce visitors to forest preserves, promote the health benefits of outdoor recreation, and provide a variety of quality outdoor recreation opportunities. The plan discusses two recreational opportunities near Lansing – the first being the recently acquired Shabbona Woods for day camping, and the second being a proposed canoe launch on Thorn Creek.

### **Capital Improvements Plan**

*Created in 2013*

The 2013 update to the Forest Preserves' 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan addresses infrastructure investment needs and priorities prompted in part by the \$110 million in General Obligation Bonds that were issued in June 2012. Those bonds were issued to fund land acquisition and capital improvement projects. The CIP summarizes planned capital projects and funding sources. Major capital improvement projects taking place in the Lansing area include the completion of the Thorn Creek Bicycle Trail, a parking lot at Thorn Creek Preserve, a canoe launch at Thorn Creek (2014), and camping facilities in Shabbona Woods (2014).

## **Camp Master Plan**

*Created in 2013*

The Forest Preserves' Camp Master Plan provides a framework for capital investment within their campgrounds. The Camp Master Plan identifies core sites, concept plans, cost projections, and management strategies. Shabbona Woods, to the north of Lansing, is listed as one of the top five priority camp sites in Cook County. The Camp Master Plan recommends that camping facilities be constructed at Shabbona Woods. According to the District, a campground will complement existing programs within the preserve and at the Sand Ridge Nature Center.

## **Land Acquisition Plan**

*Created in 2012*

The Forest Preserve Districts' Land Acquisition Plan was created to update and guide future land acquisitions. The Plan includes overall goals, strategies, and an analysis of each of the four land acquisition focus areas. The Lan-Oak Park District is located within the Forest Preserve's southern focus area which represents the largest acquisition opportunity and the lowest land costs in Cook County. The bulk of the planned land acquisition is in the southern end of the focus area, farther south than the forest preserves near Lansing.

## **Draft Trail Master Plan**

*Created in 2013*

According to the Forest Preserve District this plan is intended to provide baseline information on the current trail system, recommend new policies and a process for assessing requests to improve unrecognized trails and to prioritize future capital improvement projects to enhance the system. Although posted on the FPDCC's website, the document is still a draft. The report concludes by stating that an action plan for 2014 will be included in the final plan.

## **Future Forest Preserve District Plans**

- *The Habitat Restoration Master Plan* will identify critical areas for conservation, future opportunities for restoration, and assess resource needs into the future. The goals of this plan are to maximize plant, animal, and habitat diversity.

## Millennium Reserve

*Created in 2011*

Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources launched Millennium Reserve in 2011. Millennium Reserve (Calumet Core) is a 220-square mile opportunity to transform a region in transition. Its goal is to catalyze innovative partnerships and action in the Calumet region that:

- Honors its cultural and industrial past;
- Restores and enhance the natural ecosystems;
- Supports healthy and prosperous communities and residents; and
- Stimulates vigorous and sustainable economic growth.

Millennium Reserve recognizes that conservation and sustainable land use in urban areas are inextricably linked to healthy communities and a robust economy.

Millennium Reserve stretches from downtown Chicago east to the Indiana border and southwest to Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Wilmington, Illinois. (See Figure 2.2) The immediate focus within this area is the Calumet Core region encompassing numerous neighborhoods on Chicago's south side, the southeast lakefront, and 35 south suburban municipalities. In aggregate, the Calumet Core includes a collection of over 15,000 acres of open space such as parks, trails, wetlands, and forest preserves. Nearly 6,000 of these acres are considered high-quality natural areas. More than 400,000 residents live in the Calumet Core.

Millennium Reserve is a shared agenda that unifies public, nonprofit, and commercial leaders seeking to make the most of the region's assets. Moreover, it is an on-going initiative guided by partners who understand community priorities, and it is designed to make on-the-ground projects happen. The initiative includes projects that range from neighborhood-based in scale to those of regional significance. Millennium Reserve recognizes the work of partners, particularly those whose decades-long commitment to the region have created the foundation for this initiative.

**Figure 2.2 Millennium Reserve**

## Lan-Oak Park District Bicycle Plan

*Completed: August, 2009*

*Prepared by the Lan-Oak Park District with the assistance of the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation (now, Active Transportation Alliance)*

The Lan-Oak Park District Bicycle Plan identifies a network of on-street bikeways. The Plan presents a 10-year program of near-, mid-, and long-term projects to improve conditions for bicycling in Lansing and to make cycling safer and more enjoyable. The Plan is being used by the Lan-Oak Park District to achieve two broad goals:

1. Maximize access to regional trails and the trails' contribution to quality of life and the local economy
2. Encourage residents to bicycle for transportation, recreation, and good health.

The Plan identifies the following five goals:

1. Maximize non-motorized access for all residents to the Pennsy Greenway and the expanding regional trail network in the Chicago Southland and Northwest Indiana.
2. Improve the safety of streets within Lansing for all roadway users.
3. Provide a convenient network that accommodates the range of cycling uses found among Lansing residents and visitors – recreation, exercise, and transportation.
4. Encourage bicycling as a choice for active living and an inexpensive, non-polluting, and convenient option for local trips.
5. Distinguish Lan-Oak Park District as a progressive public agency meeting the challenge of rapid growth in the Chicago Southland/Northwest Indiana region through the routine accommodation of non-motorized travel.

The plan's *near-term priorities* (1-3 year timeframe 2009 to 2012) included signing 13.8 miles of on-street bicycle routes; marking the location of and, when necessary, calibrating detector loops at key intersections; installation of dedicated bike lanes or shared lane markings on 7.2 miles of roadways under local jurisdiction; installation of 100 inverted-U bicycle parking racks at key locations; creation and dissemination of a Lan-Oak Park District Bicycle Map; and establishment of a bicycle programming committee to develop programs to encourage cycling and cycling safety.

The Plan's *mid-term priorities* (3-5 year timeframe 2012 to 2014) include installation of additional bike lanes or shared lane markings on roadways under county and state jurisdiction; and implementation of "road diet" conversions (from 4 travel lanes to two through-travel lanes with a center, two-way left-turn lane) along 5.2 miles of roadways under or partially under state jurisdiction.

The Plan's *long-term priorities* (6-10 year timeframe 2015 to 2020) include additional "road diet" conversions along 1.4 miles of roadway; and installation of dedicated bike lanes or shared lane markings on an additional 2.7 miles of roadway.

The Plan also includes appendices on bikeway design guidance and funding sources; details on proposed infrastructure projects; basic content of sample bike parking ordinance; and rough cost estimates for the proposed near-term projects.

## **Implementation Update**

Unfortunately, none of the recommendations have been completed since 2009. Because many of the proposed routes are on street, they are under the jurisdiction of the Village. According to Park District staff, road projects have been undertaken by the Village however no bikeway recommendations have been included in those projects.

### Figure 2.3 Lan-Oak Park District Bicycle Plan

## Lan-Oak Park District Park Plaza Concept

*Created in 2005, revised 2007*

*Led by the Park District and prepared by Design Perspectives*

Park Plaza is located at a prominent location within Downtown Lansing. The park has been improved at its northern portion facing Ridge Road. The improved portion of Park Plaza consists of a clock tower, streetscaping elements, landscaping, signage, and a portion of the Pennsy Greenway.

Beginning in 2005, the Lan-Oak Park District worked with private consultants to create a concept plan for the property. The plan was last revised in 2007 and the most recent concept plan is shown in **Figure 2.4**.

According to Park District staff the only significant change to the concept plan shown is regarding the proposed band shell. At this time, Park District staff would prefer to purchase a temporary band shell instead of constructing a permanent structure. Staff feels that a temporary stage would preserve as much of the open space as possible.

### Figure 2.4: Park Plaza Concept

## Section 3: Demographics

This section provides an overview of Lansing's demographics to gain insight into population trends and dynamics that affect the Park District. Analysis has been conducted for population, households, income and age. For comparisons and trend analysis, data for the same periods for Cook County and the seven-county Chicago metropolitan region were analyzed. Since the taxing boundaries of the Park District coincide with the Village limits, the analysis considers the boundaries of the Park District and Village to be the same. The data presented in this section comes from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census as well as the 2007-2011 American Community Survey, all of which the U.S. Census Bureau collects.

### Key Findings

The following are key findings regarding the existing conditions of Lansing's population:

- **While Lansing's total population remained unchanged in the last decade, the community experienced a significant increase in its ethnic diversity, which could impact its social and cultural makeup.** In contrast to the surrounding communities that lost significant population over the last decade, Lansing's population was stable. Racial makeup of the community is changing rapidly, with significant increases in the African American and Hispanic/Latino populations between 2000 and 2010. The African American population almost doubled in the last decade and now represents over a third of the Village's total population, from about 10% in 2000. The Hispanic population more than doubled in that period. Parks can play an important role in bringing together residents of diverse backgrounds and creating a shared sense of community.
- **Lansing features a demographic that is much older than the surrounding region.** Proportionally, it has a higher senior population (65 years and over), representing 13.5% of the area's total population, than does Cook County (11.9%) or the region (11.3%). The median age for Lansing is 38.5 years, which is much higher than that of the county (35.3). Communities such as Lansing that have an aging population may require particular *Aging in Place* strategies to deal with the economic, social and health needs of their aging population.
- **Lansing is mostly characterized by low-density, single-family detached housing with most households owning their homes.** About 68% of the Village's housing stock is single-family detached units whereas the proportion for the County and the region is approximately half of the total housing units. Residential vacancy rate as well as the proportion of housing stock that is occupied by renters is significantly lower compared to the County and the region.

## Demographic Profile and Analysis

While a community may have several parks and recreation facilities, the distribution, access, conditions and use of parks and facilities can vary significantly across different populations and neighborhoods. Studies have shown the distribution of, access to, and use of parks, green spaces and recreational facilities in communities often depend on demographic and socioeconomic status.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of place cannot be overemphasized in understanding the distribution of health and disease in the population. Place, along with race, continue to be defining characteristics of opportunity.<sup>7</sup> Varying opportunities in communities can be associated with differences in health outcomes that, for example, has resulted in a 17-year gap in life expectancy in Cook County, Illinois<sup>8</sup>. Taking into consideration regional geographic patterns of opportunity, Lansing, Illinois in a 2005 report was found to be a low opportunity place based on standard measures for fiscal capacity, access to transportation and jobs, quality of life and school variables<sup>9</sup>.

Lansing is a mid-sized municipality in Cook County with a population of 28,331. Its average household size is comparable to many mid-sized communities in the County and the metropolitan region. In contrast to the population loss that continues to affect Cook County, the population of Lansing remained unchanged between 2000 and 2010, with the Village's population seeing a decrease of only one resident. While the population of the Chicago metropolitan region grew by 3.5 percent in the last decade, the County's population declined by 3.4 percent. Like Cook County, all the communities surrounding Lansing lost population during the same period. Calumet City, South Holland, Thornton and Glenwood lost 5.2 percent, 0.5 percent, 9.5 percent and 0.3 percent of their total populations respectively.

**Table 3.1 Population, Households, and Household Size, 2010**

	Lansing	Cook County	Region
Population	28,331	5,194,675	8,431,386
Households	10,957	1,966,356	3,088,156

<sup>6</sup> Gordon-Larsen P., Nelson C. M., Page P., and Popkin M. B., (2006) *Inequality in the Built Environment Underlies Key Health Disparities in the Physical Activity and Obesity*". *Pediatrics*, 117(2):417-424. Retrieved from [http://www.msstate.edu/pdfs/Inequality\\_in\\_the\\_Built\\_Environment.pdf](http://www.msstate.edu/pdfs/Inequality_in_the_Built_Environment.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Squires, G. & Kubrin, C. (2005). *Privileged places: Race, uneven development and the geography of opportunity in urban America*. *Urban Studies*, 42(1), 47-68. doi: 10.1080=0042098042000309694. Retrieved from <http://www.gwu.edu/~soc/docs/Squires-Kubrin.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute and Cook County, Illinois Place Matters Team in conjunction with the Center on Human Needs, Virginia Commonwealth University and Virginia Network for Geospatial Health Research. (2012). *Place matters for health in Cook County: Ensuring opportunities for good health for all*. Washington D.C.: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

<sup>9</sup> Lukehart et al. (2005). *Segregation of opportunity: The structure of advantage and disadvantage in the Chicago region*. Retrieved from [http://www.kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2005/05\\_2005\\_ChicagoComofOppReport.pdf](http://www.kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2005/05_2005_ChicagoComofOppReport.pdf)

Average Household Size	2.58	2.60	2.73
Source: 2010 Census			

**Table 3.2 Population and Change in Population, 2000 and 2010**

	Lansing	Cook County	Region
Population, 2000	28,332	5,376,741	8,146,264
Population, 2010	28,331	5,194,675	8,431,386
Change, 2000-10	-1	-182,066	285,122
Change as %, 2000-10	0.0%	-3.4%	3.5%
Source: 2000 and 2010 Census			

Lansing features a racial and ethnic makeup that differs from that of Cook County and the Chicago metropolitan region. At almost 52%, the percentage of White residents is higher in Lansing than in Cook County and about the same as in the Chicago region overall. Lansing's African American population (31%) is significantly higher than that of Cook County (24%) and the Chicago metropolitan region (17%). The community is rapidly becoming more diverse with African Americans almost doubling their numbers in the last decade and Hispanics increasing by 153% between 2000 and 2010. Although the percentage of Hispanics in Lansing is significantly lower than that of Cook County and the Chicago region, their population has grown rapidly and currently makes up 15% of the Village's total population. The population of Whites declined significantly (36.8%) in the last decade.

**Table 3.3a Race and Ethnicity, 2010**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
White	14,681	51.8%	2,278,358	43.9%	4,486,557	53.2%
Hispanic or Latino*	4,103	14.5%	1,244,762	24.0%	1,823,609	21.6%
Black or African American	8,847	31.2%	1,265,778	24.4%	1,465,417	17.4%
Asian	255	0.9%	318,869	6.1%	513,694	6.1%
Other**	445	1.6%	86,908	1.7%	142,109	1.7%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>28,331</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>5,194,675</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,431,386</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
* includes Hispanic or Latino residents of any race						
** includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races						
Source: 2010 Census						

**Table 3.3b Race and Ethnicity, 2000**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
White	23,238	82.0%	2,558,709	47.6%	4,687,259	57.5%
Hispanic or Latino*	1,624	5.7%	1,071,740	19.9%	1,409,202	17.3%
Black or African American	2,983	10.5%	1,390,448	25.9%	1,537,534	18.9%
Asian	201	0.7%	257,843	4.8%	375,993	4.6%

Other**	286	1.0%	98,001	1.8%	136,276	1.7%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>28,332</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>5,376,741</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>8,146,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
* includes Hispanic or Latino residents of any race						
** includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races						
Source: 2000 Census						

**Table 3.4 Changes in Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2010**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Change in Population	Percent Change	Change in Population	Percent Change	Change in Population	Percent Change
White	-8,557	-36.8%	-280,351	-11.0%	-200,702	-4.3%
Hispanic or Latino*	2,479	152.6%	173,022	16.1%	414,407	29.4%
Black or African American	5,864	196.6%	-124,670	-9.0%	-72,117	-4.7%
Asian	54	26.9%	61,026	23.7%	137,701	36.6%
Other**	159	55.6%	-11,093	-11.3%	5,833	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>-182,066</b>	<b>-3.4%</b>	<b>285,122</b>	<b>3.5%</b>
* includes Hispanic or Latino residents of any race						
** includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races						
Source: 2010 Census						

In terms of age groups, Lansing features a demographic that is much older than the surrounding region. The Village’s median age of 38.3 years is much higher than the median age for Cook County (35.3 years). As the Lansing’s population becomes older, it needs to be prepared to deal with the economic, social and health consequences of its aging population. Even though the Village has already instituted a number of programs to serve seniors, more strategies are needed to prepare the community to accommodate its aging population and help many longtime residents remain in the Village as they age.

**Table 3.5 Age Cohorts and Median Age, 2010**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Under 19 years	7,831	27.6%	1,374,096	26.5%	2,346,937	27.8%
20 to 34 years	5,163	18.2%	1,204,066	23.2%	1,790,049	21.2%
35 to 49 years	5,825	20.6%	1,067,351	20.5%	1,807,886	21.4%
50 to 64 years	5,669	20.0%	928,833	17.9%	1,534,488	18.2%
65 to 79 years	2,587	9.1%	436,799	8.4%	679,470	8.1%
80 years and over	1,256	4.4%	183,530	3.5%	272,556	3.2%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>28,331</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>5,194,675</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,431,386</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Median Age (2010)	38.3		35.3		35.5	
Source: 2010 Census						

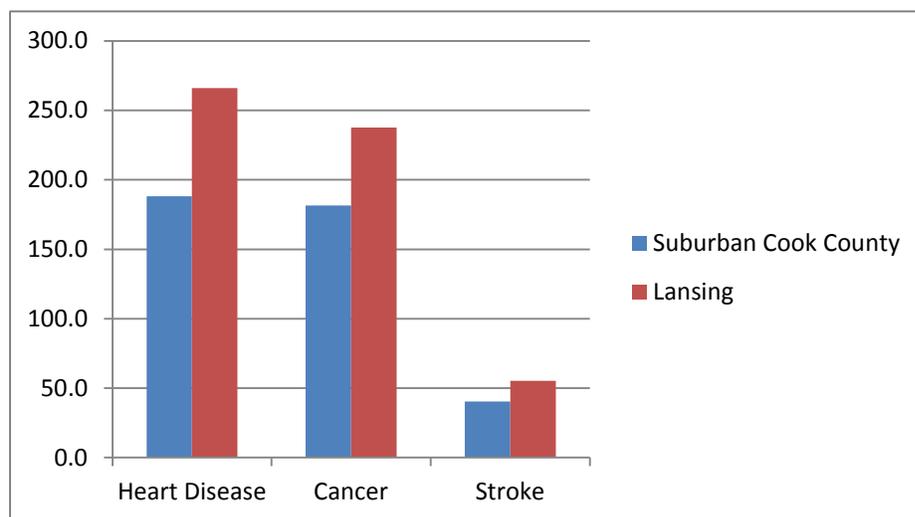
## Implications of Demographics and Health

The overall age-adjusted mortality rate in Lansing is nearly 10% higher than for all of suburban Cook County (799.0 deaths per 100,000 population vs. 727.0 deaths per 100,000 population), and is about 12% lower than the rate for the south suburban Cook County (906.8 deaths per 100,000 population).

### Chronic Diseases

As is true both across suburban Cook County and the nation, chronic diseases are the leading causes of death in Lansing where heart disease, cancer and stroke account for over 60% of all deaths<sup>10</sup>. Corresponding age-adjusted death rates for these chronic diseases are noticeably higher for Lansing than the overall rates for suburban Cook County. For example, the age-adjusted heart disease mortality rate for Lansing (283.6 deaths per 100,000 population) is more than 40% higher than the corresponding rate for suburban Cook County as a whole. (Figure 3.1)

**Figure 3.1: Comparison of 2006-2008 Age-Adjusted Rates (per 100,000) for Heart Disease, Cancer and Stroke between Lansing and Suburban Cook County, Illinois**



### Overweight and Obesity

Obesity has increased among young people over the last few decades. Nationally, 1 in 8 preschoolers are obese. Research indicates these overweight young children are five times more likely than their non-obese peers to become overweight or obese as they age<sup>11</sup>. Today, in suburban Cook County, about one in three kindergartners (33%) and four out of 10 (40%) of children in 9<sup>th</sup> grade are overweight or obese --- both of which are higher than national averages for children in similar age groups<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Illinois Department of Public Health. (n.d.). Death Pull File 2006-2008.

<sup>11</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). Progress on childhood obesity. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/childhoodobesity/>

<sup>12</sup> Cook County Department of Public Health and Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children. (2013). *2010–2012 overweight and obesity prevalence among school-aged children in Suburban Cook County, Illinois*. Retrieved from <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports>

Eating well and being physically active are important behaviors for maintaining a healthy weight. While generally comparable to state and national rates, results of the 2010 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBS) for suburban Cook County found the following:

- Only 1 in 5 youth ate 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day weekly
- 1 in 4 youth drank soda pop at least once per day
- 1 in 6 youth did not meet the daily recommended minutes of physical activity

The importance of regular physical activity in young children cannot be overemphasized. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) affirms the importance of physical activity for preschoolers. In addition to fostering healthy habits through early exposure to physical activity, healthy physical development during this stage of life is key to learning more complex motor skills as children age<sup>13</sup>.

## Income

Lansing features a median household income of \$ 51,637. That income is slightly lower than that of Cook County. The Village’s income distribution reflects its middle-class identity. While about 24% of Cook County households earn income greater than \$100,000, only 17.6% of Lansing households earn that income level. Lansing does not feature a higher percentage of low-income households; almost half of its households earn annual incomes between \$25,000 and \$75,000.

**Table 3.6 Household Income**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Less than \$25,000	2,470	21.4%	452,334	23.4%	591,742	19.4%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	3,149	27.3%	439,225	22.7%	643,646	21.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2,379	20.6%	345,130	17.8%	546,085	17.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,635	14.2%	238,954	12.4%	408,895	13.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	1,429	12.4%	252,033	13.0%	464,935	15.3%
\$150,000 and over	488	4.2%	207,095	10.7%	391,533	12.9%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>11,550</b>	<b>100.0%</b>				
Median Income (2012)	\$51,637		\$54,648		N/A	
Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau						

<sup>13</sup> Pica, R. (2011). *Why preschoolers need physical education*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved from [http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/201103/Leaps&Bounds\\_Online0311.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/201103/Leaps&Bounds_Online0311.pdf)

Educational attainment levels suggest a correlation with income distribution. The percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher is significantly lower than Cook County or the Chicago metropolitan region.

**Table 3.7 Education Levels, 2012**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Population, 25 years and over	19,428	100.0%	3,434,122	100.0%	5,495,474	100.0%
High school diploma or higher	17,197	88.5%	2,875,498	83.7%	4,719,937	85.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4,129	21.3%	1,157,194	33.7%	1,938,981	35.3%

Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

## Employment

The Village of Lansing suffers from high unemployment affecting communities throughout the Chicago region. Lansing’s employment levels are relatively similar to the County and regional averages. The proportion of the population that is not in the labor force is slightly lower than that of Cook County but is higher than that of the region.

**Table 3.8 Employment Status, 2012**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Population, 16 years and over	22,302	100.0%	4,092,752	100.0%	6,529,357	100.0%
In labor force	15,072	67.6%	2,723,727	66.6%	4,464,280	68.4%
Employed*	13,494	89.5%	2,429,269	89.2%	4,013,381	89.9%
Unemployed	1,578	10.5%	292,919	10.8%	436,773	9.8%
Not in labor force	7,230	32.4%	1,369,025	33.4%	2,065,077	31.6%

Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau  
\*Does not include employed population in Armed Forces"

## Housing

In Lansing, single-family detached homes and multi-family units are the most common types of housing. Single-family detached homes make up over 68% of the housing stock in Lansing, while multi-family buildings of five or more units make up approximately 24% of the stock. The percentage of single-family homes in Lansing is significantly higher than the share in Cook County and the region. While only 30.7% of the housing stock in Lansing is multi-family, more than a half (54.2%) of the housing stock in Cook County is multi-family housing. This indicates that Lansing has a lower overall housing density as well as a limited diversity of housing types.

**Table 3.9. Housing Type (Units), 2012**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Housing Units*	8,374	100.0%	2,161,167	100.0%	3,352,393	100.0%
Single, detached	8,374	67.8%	867,604	40.1%	1,668,716	49.8%
Single, attached	178	1.4%	119,153	5.5%	252,984	7.5%
2 Units	115	0.9%	222,356	10.3%	249,178	7.4%
3 to 4 Units	632	5.1%	250,449	11.6%	282,452	8.4%
5+ Units	3,054	24.7%	701,605	32.5%	870,930	26.0%

\*Total, excluding mobile, boat, RV, van, etc  
Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, Census

Most of the Village’s housing units are owner-occupied, with over 72% of the occupied units being owner-occupied. Multi-family housing is dispersed throughout the Village, primarily along Torrence Avenue, 186th Street, Exchange Avenue, Rosewood Drive, Bernice Road and in a few sites along the railroad. A majority of the rental units are contained in larger apartment buildings like Ridgewood Apartments, Salem Cross Apartments, Regal Apartments, Kings Crossings, Golden Manor Apartments and Sandridge Apartments among others.

**Table 3.10. Housing Occupancy and Tenure, 2010**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Occupied	10,957	100.0%	1,966,356	90.2%	3,088,156	100.0%
Owner-Occupied	7,896	72.1%	1,143,857	58.2%	2,022,176	65.5%
Renter-Occupied	3,061	27.9%	822,499	41.8%	1,065,980	34.5%

Source: 2010 Census

The median housing value for homes in Lansing (\$143,600) is significantly lower than the median home value in Cook County (\$244,900). According to U.S. Census data from 2008-2012, over 93% of the homes in Lansing value at \$250,000 or less, compared 51.5% for the County and 50.2% for the region. In contrast, only one percent of the Village’s housing stock is valued at \$400,000 or above, compared to 20.2% in the County and in the region.

**Table 3.11. Housing Value, 2012**

	Lansing		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Less than \$100,000	1,259	15.0%	90,412	7.8%	130,071	6.4%
\$100,000 to \$249,999	6,556	78.0%	468,679	40.5%	834,102	40.9%
\$250,000 to \$399,999	509	6.1%	343,510	29.7%	624,532	30.7%
\$400,000 to \$749,999	69	0.8%	192,073	16.6%	345,950	17.0%
\$750,000 or more	16	0.2%	61,978	5.4%	102,585	5.0%
Total	8,399		1,140,135		2,013,880	
Median value, 2012	\$ 143,600		\$ 244,900		N/A	
Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau						

### **Homes for a Changing Region Report Summary**

Based on Lansing’s expected growth, the community’s current housing capacity will be unable to meet future housing demand. To help address future housing demand and supply, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC), the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA), the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) and CMAP conducted a multi-jurisdictional *Homes for a Changing Region* study– in collaboration with Lansing, Hazel Crest, Olympia Fields and Park Forest. The study produced a housing policy action plan to help the communities create a balanced mix of housing, serve current and future populations, and enhance livability.

## Section 4: Community Outreach

One of the key goals in the development of the Lan-Oak Park District Master Plan is to ensure the active engagement of stakeholders throughout the planning process. A number of engagement activities have been designed to better understand issues and opportunities currently facing the community. In particular, the outreach strategy focuses on including the Park District and its users, Lansing residents, area sports groups, school districts, community organizations, religious institutions, youth and senior citizens.

### Key Findings

The following are key conclusions from the input gathered during community engagement activities:

- **The Park District is rich in the number of green spaces it offers to residents. However, the quality of the parks and associated facilities need improvement.** Residents expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of access to washroom facilities, lack of play structures in neighborhood parks, missing equipment including water fountains, benches, basketball hoops, and similar factors.
- **The Park District's financial state needs to improve in order for the Park District to develop district parks and facilities.** The Park District may have to seek out other funding sources to repair and expand facilities. The Park District might want to also consider an adopt-a-park program, where residents would organize to invest in their neighborhood parks. Additionally, the Park District should manage its partnerships so that resources do not become drained.
- **Residents would like to see the Park District play more of a role in contributing to the quality of life and overall health of Lansing.** The Park District could do so by offering healthy food and beverage options, meeting the cultural needs of the community, linking residents with other resources and facilities, and providing residents with opportunities to give feedback about the park district.
- **The changing demographics of the Village of Lansing are an opportunity for the Lan-Oak Park District to access its parks and facilities as well as its programming and activities.** Doing so will help the Park District to meet the cultural needs of the community, ultimately fostering social interaction among all community residents and contributing to a greater quality of life in the village.
- **The Park District's former outdoor swimming pool is an eyesore to the community.** To address the vacated facility, the Park District must decide to either remove or renovate it.
- **Residents are concerned about their safety when visiting Park District parks and facilities.** The Park District must install park features such as lighting to foster safety as well as launch a campaign that promotes safety in parks throughout the village.
- **Residents value opportunities for active transportation throughout the village.** The Park District may want to publicize Pennsy Greenway Trail more as well as install complementary facilities (e.g., trailhead) to encourage usage. The Park District may also

want to consider installing more walking/biking/running paths around its parks to encourage physical activity throughout the village.

- **Residents would like to see Park Plaza developed.** The development of Park Plaza is an opportunity to complement the businesses and restaurants in the surrounding downtown area.

## Steering Committee Meetings

A Master Plan Steering Committee has been created for this project. The Steering Committee is tasked with providing guidance and feedback on existing issues and opportunities, developing central goals, reviewing plan documents, and identifying stakeholders who should be involved in the planning process. Members of the Steering Committee include:

- Kristi DeLaurentiis, Village of Lansing (*no longer employed at the Village*)
- Sharon Desjardins, Lan-Oak Park District staff member
- Mike Fish, Former Lan-Oak Park District Board member
- Patrick Gulotta, Lan-Oak Park District Board member
- Jo-Ellyn Kelley, Lansing Association for Community Events
- John Kelly, Lan-Oak Park District Board member
- Maureen Mason, Lansing Public Library
- Erin Meegan-Polanski, Lansing Chamber of Commerce
- Gina Massuda Barnett, Cook County Department of Public Health
- Dan Podgorski, Lansing Old Timers
- Bob Tropp, Lan-Oak Park District Board member
- John Wilson, Lan-Oak Park District staff member

The first steering committee meeting was held on October 2, 2013 at the Eisenhower Fitness and Community Center. At the meeting, committee members were introduced to the project and discussed important issues and opportunities faced by the Park District. The following list highlights comments and input received from members at that meeting.

### **Strengths**

According to the steering committee the park district has a variety of strengths but that its staff, commissioners, and residents are its most important asset. Members discussed how volunteers are important to the District's success and in its ability to offer activities and events. The large variety of programs offered by the district was also noted many times as a key strength. Other strengths include the Eisenhower Center, the Pennsy Greenway, and Park Plaza.

### **Issues**

A number of significant issues were focused upon by members of the committee. The District's biggest issues are its poor financial condition, especially its lack of funds for capital improvements. This has resulted in poor park maintenance throughout the District. With its limited staff and funding, many parks are in need of major reinvestment.

## Key Person Interviews

In order to gain further insight into issues and opportunities that exist in the Park District, CMAP staff conducted interviews with several key stakeholders. These individuals represented a wide variety of interests and perspectives including Park District staff, sports groups and affiliations, residents, and representatives from community organizations. Collectively, these stakeholders brought up community needs ranging from issues with the physical environment to the District's financial situation and how the District promotes health. The following list highlights comments and input received during the interviews:

### **Strengths**

Many noted that the District provides a large number of quality programs for residents of all ages. The Eisenhower Center was mentioned several times as the most attractive and important indoor facility in the District. Other strengths of the District included its role in providing events, its amount of parks and open space, Pennsy Greenway, and Park Plaza. Also, despite the District's financial situation, it was mentioned that the Park District maximizes dollars to the best extent possible in spite of the limited funds available

### **Issues**

The Park District's poor financial situation was discussed most often as its biggest issue. Related to that issue is poor park maintenance, limited staff, limited numbers of programs and outdoor recreational facilities, and cost of certain programs and services. Other issues included more specific problems with current facilities, desired facilities, or additional programs that aren't currently offered. Another key issue mentioned was the need for the District to tell its story better, and to engage more residents in its programs and activities.

## Community Workshop

On November 13, 2013, the Park District hosted the "*Creating a Healthier South Suburban Community*" workshop to understand the links between community development and health. This workshop was one of three taking place in the Chicago metropolitan region during fall of 2013; others were held on the South Side of Chicago and in Aurora. The workshops were built off of the Healthy Communities Summit held in Chicago in June 2013 at the Federal Reserve Bank, where nearly 100 stakeholders came together to share ideas related to community development and health.

Throughout the workshop residents shared how park districts could positively impact resident health, including:

- Host an annual health fair
- Offer more free fitness programs to the community
- Address health through programming and activities

This effort was led by the Illinois Public Health Institute. Other organizations involved included the Cook County Department of Public Health, Adler School of Professional Psychology Institute on Social Exclusion, Access Community Health Network, Department of

Housing and Urban Development, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, LISC/Chicago, The Chicago Community Trust, the Northern Illinois Public Health Consortium, and CMAP.

## Community Survey Summary

CMAP and the Cook County Department of Public Health worked with Park District staff to develop and administer a community survey. The survey was available on-line and the link to access the survey was publicized at various locations throughout the community including the Park District website, Village of Lansing website, and Northwest Indiana Times. The survey was available for nearly two months between November 2013 and January 2014.

Below are key findings from the survey, which contained questions that focused on general opinions, usage and quality of parks as well as facilities, future needs and improvements, and demographics. A more detailed summary is included in **Appendix A**.

### Key District Wide Findings

- Over two-thirds of respondents hear about the Park District through its seasonal guide.
- Nearly 95% of the survey respondents consider the Park District to be important to them.
- When asked about their level of satisfaction of the Park District parks and facilities, majority of respondents are satisfied or do not have an opinion.
- The majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that the Park District contributes to the quality of life and overall health of Lansing.

### Key Usage Findings

- Respondents stated that the parks with the highest quality were Schultz Park, Rotary Park, Erfert Park, Lan-Oak Park, Stoney Ridge Park, and Van Laten Park.
- For the most part, respondents occasionally or rarely use Park District park amenities.
- Almost 18% of respondents feel unsafe in Park District parks.
- As shown in the following table, over 40% of respondents (or members of their household) have used the Park District parks in the last year.

**Table 4.1: Usage and quality of LOPD facilities**

In the last 12 months, how frequently have you or a member of your household used the Park District parks?	
Never	6.76%
Rarely	18.92%
Occasionally	33.78%
A good amount of time	24.32%
A great deal	16.22%

## **Key Usage Findings**

- In general, all of the types of Park District outdoor recreational facilities were rated in poor or fair condition including its baseball diamonds, basketball courts, horseshoe pits, volleyball courts, Skate Park, tennis courts, bathrooms, and playgrounds.
- Respondents shared their level of support for a variety of park amenities. Those existing facilities that were noted as having the most support for continued maintenance and improvements included: trails, gardens, trees, indoor ice rink, indoor and outdoor swimming/splash pads, picnic areas, playgrounds, the Eisenhower Center, restrooms at parks, and security lighting.

## **Focus Groups**

In an effort to be as inclusive as possible, focus groups will be held with seniors and youth of the Lansing community. Their input to this process is critical as existing or potential users of the Park District. These sessions will take place after the existing conditions report has been compiled. Therefore, results from the focus group will be included in the final appendix.

## Section 5: Governance

This section introduces the different governmental agencies and private groups that assist the Park District in providing parks and recreation in Lansing. Existing parks and recreation programs are provided by a variety of agencies in addition to the Park District including the Village of Lansing, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (discussed in more detail in the following section), regional organizations, and private entities. The information in this section was obtained from Park District staff, Village staff, Forest Preserve District of Cook County representatives, and project team research and analysis.

### Key Findings

The following are the key findings regarding the provision of parks and recreation within the community.

- *The Park District works closely with other entities to provide recreational programs for residents.* The Park District has a well-established history of working with other groups and governmental agencies to provide parks and recreation. The District works with several groups including the Village of Lansing, School Districts, Forest Preserve, Library, Chamber of Commerce and the Lansing Old Timers. The District is very much aware that partnerships are key to serving its residents.
- *Additional opportunities may exist for partnering with School Districts.* The Park District should begin discussions with the school districts to see if additional formal “shared use” agreements are possible. At this time the Park District shares the football field at Heritage Park with School District #171. New opportunities may exist for both indoor and outdoor facilities. This could eliminate any duplication of service and reduce costs for both.

### Village of Lansing

The Village of Lansing and the Lan-Oak Park District work together on a number of projects and events. The Village supports a number of community events and activities within Lansing, many in cooperation with the Park District and the Chamber of Commerce. In terms of facilities, the Village has a number of administration and public works facilities located throughout the community. As part of the Steering Committee for the Village’s new Comprehensive Plan, a Park District representative, Mr. John Wilson, provided input throughout their process to ensure that parks and open space are supported in the community.

### Schools

Two elementary school districts, one high school district, and several private and parochial schools serve Lansing. Elementary school districts #158 and #171 (Sunnybrook School District) provide a number of school facilities throughout the community. High School District #215 has Thornton Fractional South High School for students from Lansing and Lynwood. Each school

has both indoor and outdoor recreation and programming space, however, at this time, only School District #171 shares the football field at Heritage Park. No other formal agreements between the Park District and the School District(s) exists.

## **Library**

The Lansing Public Library moved into its current facility in 1976, the old location becoming the current Village Hall. At this time, the Park District does not have a formal agreement to use any space within the library.

## **Chamber of Commerce**

The Lansing Chamber of Commerce exists to advance commercial, industrial, civic, and general business success, as well as the quality of life in the village. The Chamber annually sponsors a number of community events in Lansing including the Annual Golf Outing, Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, Good Neighbor Parade, Sidewalk Sales, Santa House, and Taste of the Holidays. The Park District and the Chamber work together on many community events and festivals.

## **Private Recreation Providers**

### **Lansing Old Timers**

The Lansing Old Timers Association is a key partner for the Park District. The association provides oversight to Lansing Little League Baseball, Lansing Challenger Program for boys and girls ages 6 through 18 with disabilities, Lansing Babe Ruth Baseball, Lansing 35&Over Baseball, Lansing Girls Softball, Lansing Volleyball, and Lions Football. The majority of the baseball programs are offered at Old Timers Sports Complex.

## **Unincorporated Areas**

Currently there are a number of unincorporated parcels adjacent to Lansing and the Lan-Oak Park District. The majority of these parcels are single-family detached residential homes.

### **Figure 5.1 Unincorporated Areas**

## Section 6: Existing Conditions

Within Lansing, natural resources, parks, and open space are provided primarily by the Park District and the nearby forest preserves owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. This section provides a summary of the existing conditions in terms of Park District facilities, Forest Preserve District of Cook County holdings, trail systems, and environmental conditions.

### Key Findings

The following are key findings regarding parks and facilities within the Lan-Oak Park District.

- **The majority of Lan-Oak Park District facilities are in need of improved maintenance and repair.** A review of the park system showed many parks and park facilities are in very poor condition. While some, like the Eisenhower Center, are popular facilities in excellent condition, many other facilities are in such poor condition that they need to be removed completely. Unfortunately, as discussed in greater detail in the final section of this report, the majority of the park's facilities are in need or improved maintenance or replacement. According to staff, the Park District has only \$124,000 a year to spend on capital projects. As a reference, that amount could be spend on only one new playground (some Park Districts in the region budget \$200,000 for a new playground). Therefore the balance between maintenance of existing facilities and adding new features leans strongly towards only ongoing maintenance efforts.
- **The Park District's parks and facilities appear to be evenly distributed throughout the community.** At this time no significant areas have been determined to be underrepresented in terms of space. However, as we move through the planning process the Master Plan will identify if there are underserved areas for open space and/or facilities based upon national standards.
- **Neighborhood park service areas are limited due to significant pedestrian barriers.** As illustrated later in this section a neighborhood park typically serves residents within ½ mile. This recommended service area is reduced by pedestrian or physical barriers such as creeks, interstates, and rail lines. Many of the services areas for neighborhood parks in Lansing are impacted by barriers which reduces the number of residents within walking distance of a park.
- **The Cook County Forest Preserve District is a tremendous environmental and recreational resource in the area that provides hundreds of acres of open space and environmental protection near Lansing.** A number of off-street trails exist within the nearby Forest Preserve of Cook County preserves, connecting to other regional trail systems including the Pennsy Greenway. The Forest Preserve also continues to plan for and add trails whenever feasible. Recently the Forest Preserve has completed a Trails Master Plan and is currently constructing extensions to both the Thorn Creek Bicycle Trail and the Sand Ridge Bicycle Trail.

- **The Pennsy Greenway is an important regional bike trail.** Its connections to other regional trails (in Illinois and Indiana) present excellent tourism and economic development opportunities for Lansing. The Village also continues to plan for future trails. The Village of Lansing’s 2009 Bicycle System Plan, and the updated Comprehensive Plan, both provide a recommended off-street and on-street trail system through the community.
- **Several parks include detention and retention areas that aid in stormwater maintenance.** The Village of Lansing and homeowners associations also have detention and retention ponds located throughout the community.
- **Three creeks run through the community that creates natural greenways.** Thorn Creek runs through the forest preserve and meets with the Little Calumet River that forms the northern boundary of Lansing. North Creek also runs from the preserve, however, it meanders east through the southern portion of the village.

## Lan-Oak Park District Facilities

This subsection includes a detailed analysis of the existing parks and facilities owned and maintained by the Park District. The analysis includes a summary of the District’s existing parks and facilities, park classifications, standards and level of service analysis, and lastly an overall inventory of the District’s facilities.

### Existing Parks and Facilities

The Lan-Oak Park District currently owns twenty-four parks and almost 140 acres of open space within the community (see **Figure 6.1 and Table 6.1**). Seven of the twenty-four parks are leased (as shown in **Table 6.0**)

**Table 6.0 Leased Parks**

Park	Lessor	Lease Expires	Notes
Heritage Park	School District 171	July 15, 2028	
Oakwood Park	ComEd	March 31, 2033	Part of the lease for the Pennsy Greenway Spur
Jaycees Park	Village of Lansing	December 31, 2017	
Veterans Park	Village of Lansing	December 31, 2017	
Bernice Park	Village of Lansing	December 31, 2017	
Sports Complex	Village of Lansing	December 31, 2017	
Volunteers Park	ComEd	March 29, 2030	Leased property is the connection

To provide a more detailed analysis of the existing conditions at each of its parks, this report also includes a detailed inventory of each park site, including an aerial, description of existing facilities, and recent photos (see **Figures 6.8 to 6.30**).

## Figure 6.1. Park Inventory

**Table 6.1. Existing Parks and Facilities**

### Park Classifications

The Lan-Oak Park District park system consists primarily of three types of parks: 1) neighborhood parks, 2) community parks, and 3) special use parks. Separating parks into different classifications will help in understanding park service areas which will identify if any gaps or duplication in services exist. The following types of parks create the Lan-Oak Park District system<sup>14</sup>:

#### Neighborhood Parks

The majority of Lan-Oak Park District parks are classified as Neighborhood Parks. These parks are the basic unit of the park system which functions as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. In the Park District, these parks typically include a playground. The service area for a neighborhood park is ½ mile (a typical 10-minute walk). Neighborhood parks usually are ¼ acre (tot-lots) to 5 acres in size.

#### Community Parks

There are only a few community parks in the Lan-Oak Park District. These parks serve a larger purpose and geographic area than neighborhood parks. Community parks may have unique environmental or recreational features (such as a skate park, or a fishing area). Community Parks often have a service area of 2 miles. They are usually between 5 to 20 acres in size. Community Parks in the Lan-Oak Park District include Gus Bock Park, Erfert Park, Lan-Oak Park, Van Laten Park, and Rotary Park.

#### Special Use

Special use parks are unique in the park district. Parks in this classification include Pennsy Greenway, Park Plaza, the Eisenhower Center, and Old Timers Sports Complex. There are no recommended standards for special use areas.

## Figure 6.2. Neighborhood Parks

## Figure 6.3. Community Parks

## Figure 6.4. Special Use

### Standards and Level of Service

To assist in the formulation of recommendations in the final Master Plan this subsection presents the national standards and level of service recommendations that are most commonly used. The result of using these standards and recommended level of service areas is that the Master Plan will identify residential neighborhoods that are either underserved, or over served by park sites.

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<sup>14</sup> NRPA's Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines.

### ***Pedestrian Barriers***

A key component of any discussion concerning level of service recommendations is the concept of pedestrian barriers. Pedestrian barriers can be either physical or visual impediments that either completely block, or discourage, pedestrian activity. Within Lansing, pedestrian barriers include the interstate, active rail line, and creeks. (**Figure 6.5**). As discussed later in this section, when analyzing park service areas, these barriers are taken into consideration and quite often reduce coverage areas of neighborhood parks

**Figure 6.5. Pedestrian Barriers**

### ***Level of Service***

CMAP assessed the service area coverage for each park type using industry standards such as National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) level of service as well as the Illinois Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Plan (SCORP). In addition, barriers such as rail lines, Interstate-80, and creeks were factored in to understand where gaps may exist (as identified on **Figure 6.5**).

The Level of Service (LOS) guideline is a ratio representing the minimum amount of open space and park land needed to meet the recreation demands of the community as recommended by IAPD and NRPA. According to the NRPA, the LOS should:

- Be practicable and achievable
- Provide for an equitable allocation of resources throughout a community
- Reflect the real-time demand of its residents

After the Existing Conditions Report is presented to the Steering Committee, an important next step will be to examine the possible gaps in the park system to determine if new parks, facilities, or partnerships may help provide a more balanced coverage.

**Figure 6.6. Neighborhood Park Service Areas**

**Figure 6.7. Community Park Service Areas**

### ***Park Standards***

Park and facility standards are guidelines that define service areas based on population and support investment decisions. The population ratio method (acres/1000 of population) was used to determine the LOS for the Lan-Oak Park District. This method is used most often for determining park and recreation space standards. These standards should be viewed only as a guide – each community is different, and therefore, each should not solely rely upon national or state standards. However, by applying these standards to the population and geography of the Lan-Oak Park District, gaps and surpluses in the parks system can be identified.

As shown in the following table the major deficiencies are a lack of open space, however, the community does benefit tremendously from having Forest Preserve property nearby. The Forest Preserves provide passive activities and include multi-use trails but do not offer more

typical active recreational opportunities such as playgrounds, baseball fields, etc... A lack of basketball courts is the only major recreational facility deficiency.

**Table 6.2. Park and Facility Standards**

Facility/Open Space	National Standard (NRPA) <sup>15</sup>	Illinois State Average (SCORP) <sup>16</sup>		Current Lan-Oak Park District Population Ratio (28,331 population)		Meets NRPA Standard**	Meets State Average**
		# of facilities per 1,000	# of facilities needed to meet Illinois Average	Existing	Current Lan-Oak Park District Standard		
Open Space	10 acres per 1,000	<b>11.35 acres per 1,000</b>	<b>6.45 acres</b>	139 ac.	4.9 acres per 1,000	No	No
Baseball	1 per 5,000	<b>0.2552</b>	<b>7.2</b>	13	1 per 2,179	Yes	Yes
Basketball	1 per 5,000	<b>0.2500</b>	<b>7.0</b>	2	1 per 14,165	No	No
Dog Park	NA	<b>0.0074</b>	<b>0.2</b>	0	0	NA	No
Fishing	NA	<b>0.4080</b>	<b>11.5</b>	1	1 per 28,331	NA	No
Football	1 per 20,000	<b>0.0546</b>	<b>1.5</b>	1	1 per 28,331	No	No
Horseshoe	1 per 7,500	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	11	1 per 2,575	Yes	NA
Inline Rink	1 per 20,000	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	1	1 per 28,331	No	NA
Picnic Shelter	1 per 2,000	<b>0.2060</b>	<b>5.8</b>	15	1 per 1,888	Yes	Yes
Playgrounds	NA	<b>0.4035</b>	<b>11.4</b>	14	1 per 2,023	NA	Yes
Pool	1 per 20,000	<b>0.0282</b>	<b>0.8</b>	1	1 per 28,331	No	Yes
Outdoor Volleyball	1 per 5,000	<b>0.1700</b>	<b>4.8</b>	5	1 per 5,660	No	Yes
Skate Park	1 per 100,000	<b>0.0163</b>	<b>0.5</b>	1	1 per 28,331	Yes	Yes
Soccer	1 per 10,000	<b>0.1779</b>	<b>5.0</b>	3	1 per 9,443	Yes	No
Spray Ground	NA	<b>0.0292</b>	<b>0.8</b>	0	0	NA	No
Tennis	1 per 2,000	<b>0.4900</b>	<b>13.8</b>	13	1 per 2,179	No	No
Trails	1 mile per 2,000	<b>0.1630</b>	<b>4.6</b>	5.6 miles	1 mile per 5,059	No	Yes

Notes: Baseball is used as a common standard in this table; different types of baseball such as softball, little league have slightly different standards. Basketball includes ½ courts.

\*\* It is also important to note, that although facilities exist, many are in such poor condition that the standards are not truly being met.

<sup>15</sup> NRPA's Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines.

<sup>16</sup> <http://dnr.state.il.us/publications/pdf/00000755.pdf> - Community Outdoor Recreation Facilities in Illinois – 2008 Park Districts & Municipal Departments

## Current Park District Support of Health and Wellness

As noted earlier in this report, a key goal of the plan is to include recommendations that support community health. Table 6.3 highlights the many programs and activities that the Lan-Oak Park District currently provides that support health and wellness in the community.

**Table 6.3: Current Park District Programs Supporting Health and Wellness**

Health and Wellness Area	Park District Facilities, Policies, Programs, Events	Brief Description of Park District Activities
<b>Active Living/ Physical Activity</b>	Eisenhower Center	- The District lowered the age for the fitness center to 10 years.
		- The District is a Silver Sneakers Agency.
		- The District works with Healthways and their Prime Fitness Program
		- Kid fitness classes
		- Summer boot camp for teens
<b>Child/Youth Development</b>	Pre-school	- The District provides early childhood education via its pre-school program.
	Skate Park	- Located at Bock Park for all age groups
	Programs	- Offer programs like college cooking and interviewing skills
	Volunteer Opportunities	- Piloted having a teen serve as a Volunteer Camp Counselor, and are planning to expand on this
		- Periodically call on youth (11 years and up) to volunteer at events like the annual Halloween event
Youth Scholarship Program	- Supports families in need in providing their children with opportunities to participate in Park District programs	
<b>Community/Social Connection</b>	Eisenhower Center / Community Events	- Organizes five events for the community throughout the year
	Park Rentals	- Individuals/families are able to secure park shelter/picnic areas.
		- Sponsors a Senior Bingo twice a week
	Activities for Seniors	- Thornton Township also uses the Eisenhower Community Center to offer senior lunches – once a week; approximately 50-70 seniors participate.
People with Disabilities	- Contracts with a special recreation association to provide programs/services for children with disabilities.	
<b>Healthy Eating/ Nutrition</b>	Vending Machines	- There are a total of six vending machines all of which are located in the Eisenhower Community Center.
	Special Events/Concession Stands	- Daddy Daughter Dinner Dance – cater it in; have healthy options even with items like fried chicken
		- Farmer's Market
<b>Infection Control</b>	Encourages hand washing	- Included in parent manuals; signage in hallways and in classrooms
<b>Tobacco Prevention</b>	Smoke-Free Workplace Policy	- The District has a policy to provide a smoke-free environment for all employees and visitors.
		- Specifies designated areas will be located at least 15 feet from any entrance and air in-take vents of buildings owned and operated by Park District.
		- No smoking is allowed in any Park District vehicle.

		- Promotion of this policy and support for employees to quit.
<b>Violence Prevention</b>	Zero-Tolerance Policy	- The purpose is to indicate that all acts or threats of violence by program participants will be taken seriously and the Park District will promptly respond to any incident or suggestion of violence.
<b>Worksite Wellness</b>	Pass Policy for Full-time and Part-time Employees; Fitness Pass Policy for Village of Lansing and Certified School Teachers	- Full-time employees are eligible for a free annual membership.
		- Part-time employees are eligible to purchase an annual Fitness Center pass at a discount schedule based on number of years employed. Initiation fee is waived.
		- Village of Lansing employees and certified teachers teaching in Lansing, with proof of employment, are entitled to a \$25.00 discount on an annual membership.

## Park District Inventory

The following figures illustrate each of the existing Park District facilities. Each park was visited in the summer of 2013 and an exact inventory of the types of facilities was recorded. These figures will be especially helpful throughout the rest of the planning process as recommendations are made concerning each park site.

It is important to note that the “**ADA accessibility**” inventory for each park is based upon an informal visual inspection. For more exact information and recommendations for ADA compliance at each park please refer to the Park District’s 2010 study conducted by *Recreation Accessibility Concepts, Inc.* which is on file with the Park District.

Figures 6.8 to 6.30

## Forest Preserve District of Cook County

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) manages over 68,000 acres of woodlands, wetlands, prairies, lakes and ponds, and other natural areas. In addition to offering a wide variety of outdoor recreation, the District undertakes conservation, research, and education efforts and programs that support its mission.

### Thorn Creek Division

The Thorn Creek Division, which covers Lansing and other portions of southeast Cook County contains a number of sites adjacent to the Village in the southwest, including:

Table 6.4 Nearby Forest Preserve Amenities

Preserve	Picnic Grove	Shelter	Hiking	Equestrian Trail	In-Line Skating	Snowmobiling	Biking	Cross-Country Skiing	Fishing
Lansing Woods	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	
Sweet Woods	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Brownwell	Yes								

<b>Woods</b>									
<b>North Creek Meadow</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<b>Jurgensen Woods</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	
<b>Wampum Lake</b>	Yes	Yes							Yes

Just north of Lansing in Calumet City, the Forest Preserve also owns Sand Ridge and the Sand Ridge Nature Center, as well as Green Lake and the Green Lake Family Aquatic Center.

**Figures 6.31 to 6.36** help illustrate what amenities are available at each of the nearby preserves. Although the preserves lack active recreational facilities combined they provided hundreds of acres of open space that compensates for the Lan-Oak Park District’s lack of recommended acreage.

**Figure 6.31 Lansing Woods**

**Figure 6.32 Sweet Woods**

**Figure 6.33 Brownwell Woods**

**Figure 6.34 North Creek Meadow**

**Figure 6.35 Jurgensen Woods**

**Figure 6.36 Wampum Lake**

**Figure 6.37. Forest Preserve District of Cook County**

**Figure 6.38. Thorn Creek Bike Trail Project**

## Trail System

The Village of Lansing and the Lan-Oak Park District have made significant investments in pedestrian and bicycle routes within the community. As discussed in a previous section the Village has created a Bicycle Plan (2009), and its new Comprehensive Plan (draft 2014) also includes future bicycle routes throughout the community. This subsection highlights the key existing trail system within the community.

### Pennsy Greenway

The main off-street multi-use trail is the Pennsy Greenway. The greenway runs from the east of 186th Street northwest to Calumet City along a vacated rail line. As shown on **Figure 6.39**, the trail includes numerous at-grade street crossings and travels at-grade beneath the interstate.

The Pennsy Greenway is currently open in three segments between Calumet City, Illinois, and Schererville, Indiana. The northern portion begins at the southern end of the Burnham Greenway in Calumet City on the eastern edge of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's Green Lake Woods. The trail proceeds south to Bernice Road, crosses under I-80/94 and continues southeast through residential neighborhoods to just past the Illinois-Indiana state line. Currently approximately 3.25 miles of the greenway travels through the Lan-Oak Park District.

The Pennsy Greenway began in the 1990s. Once completed, the trail will connect to the Burnham Greenway see **Figure 6.41**) on the northern end of Lansing, travel through the community then connect with the Thorn Creek Trail, making Lansing a part of the 475-mile Grand Illinois Trail (see **Figure 6.39**). On the larger scale, the 6,000-mile American Discovery Trail traveling coast to coast will use the Pennsy Greenway as part of its trail system. The majority of the Pennsy Greenway is owned and maintained by the Lan-Oak Park District within its district boundaries. There are two small portions that are owned by the Village of Lansing: The first area is the portion of the path that travels under I 80/94 and then portion that travels adjacent to the highway alongside 175th Street, and the second area is the portion of the path that travels from Winterhoff Park to the Park Plaza.

## **Village Sidewalk System**

Lansing's neighborhoods typically include an interconnected sidewalk system, but some neighborhoods are isolated by major arterial streets or Interstates because they do not have adequate sidewalk connections. Other pedestrian barriers include the rail line and creeks.

## **Thorn Creek Trail**

Bromwell Woods Forest Preserve includes both paved and unpaved segments of Thorn Creek Trail. As shown on **Figure 6.41**, these trails both run east-west through the preserves. These trails include parking areas and at-grade crossings over Route 83 and Route 394.

## **Upcoming FPDCC Trail Projects**

According to the Forest Preserve the following projects are planned within the preserves near the Lansing community:

- ***Thorn Creek Bike Trail*** – The Thorn Creek Bicycle Trail Completion project will connect three separate portions of the existing Thorn Creek Trail system and link the Thorn Creek Trail with the Old Plank Road Trail and the Burnham Greenway Trail. The project will add 4.75 miles of new trail in Thornton, Lansing, Glenwood, Chicago Heights and Park Forest to the existing 12.7 mile system. The project is funded by the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program. (**Figure 6.38**)
- ***Sand Ridge Bicycle Trail Project*** – Planned to begin construction in 2014, this 1.3 mile long paved trail will connect the existing Burnham Greenway Trail to the Sand Ridge Nature Center, in the communities of South Holland, Lansing and Calumet City. (**Figure 6.39**)

**Figure 6.38. Thorn Creek Trail Development**

**Figure 6.39. Sand Ridge Trail Development**

**Figure 6.40. Pennsy Greenway**

**Figure 6.41 Thorn Creek Trail System**

**Figure 6.42. Burnham Greenway**

**Figure 6.43. Existing Trail System**

## **Environmental Features**

The community includes a number of high-quality and important environmental features in addition to the parks and open space owned and maintained by the Park District and the Forest Preserve District. This subsection highlights the key environmental features within Lansing including its green infrastructure, green corridors and its water.

### **Green Infrastructure**

The term "green infrastructure" has emerged as a term to refer to two different but related planning concepts: 1) site-scale green infrastructure or 2) regional green infrastructure. The latter concept plays an important role in the Parks and Open Space section of GO TO 2040.

Site-scale green infrastructure can be thought of as a suite of practices to handle stormwater that emphasize using vegetation, soils, and natural processes to mimic natural hydrology. Regional green infrastructure, on the other hand, is a planned landscape of connected open spaces that conserves ecosystem functions and provides associated benefits to human populations.

#### ***Green Infrastructure Vision***

Green infrastructure at the regional scale is described by the Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision (GIV). The accompanying map and policy describe the most important areas to protect in the region. It was originally adopted by Chicago Wilderness in 2004. Working with the Conservation Fund, Chicago Wilderness refined and updated the mapping in 2011 -2012.

The Green Infrastructure Vision for the Lansing community is shown in **Figure 6.44**. The GIV includes the key environmental features including the parks, forest preserves, creeks, and detention areas.

### **Green Corridors**

Two major utility corridors run through the Park District; a ComEd high tension electric line, and a vacated rail line that has portions that provide active recreation and natural open space preservation.

### ***Pennsy Greenway***

This greenway and its associated regional trail have already been discussed throughout this report, but it is worth noting in this subsection due to its prominence as a key green corridor. The greenway provides connections to Indiana, the Forest Preserves, and regional trails to the north.

### ***ComEd Power Lines***

ComEd owns a power line corridor through Lansing. Most of the property beneath the transmission lines is undeveloped; however, some portions are used for agriculture or are leased by the Lan-Oak Park District for parks. These utility corridors may present future opportunities for either new public park sites or trail extensions through the community.

## **Water and Detention**

The Lansing community includes a number of key water bodies and numerous detention areas. The following is a summary of the key water and detention conditions.

### ***Rivers and Streams***

The Little Calumet River forms the northern boundary of Lansing and the Lan-Oak Park District. The river follows its natural course and is usually buffered on either side by greenspace and wooded areas. According to the Village, a 1.5 mile levee system along the river is regularly inspected and repaired (if necessary) by both the Village and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Thorn Creek connects the Little Calumet River with the forest preserve just west of the community in South Holland. Thorn Creek meets North Creek which flows along Burnham Avenue from Efert Park and the Forest Preserve. Thorn Creek is channelized between 188<sup>th</sup> Street and Glenwood Lansing Road and along the northern boundary of the Lansing Airport.

### ***Floodplain and Watersheds***

As shown in **Figure 6.44** the majority of the floodplain within the community is located within the forest preserves or along the creeks and within the southern portion of the Lansing Airport. The Lansing community falls primarily within two watersheds: the Town of Black Oak Little Calumet River watershed, and the North Creek Watershed. A small portion of the northwest area of Lansing falls within the Thorn Creek Watershed.

### ***Detention***

A small number of detention ponds exist within the community with the majority of those located near or north of I-80. Many of the large retail uses near the Interstate include detention areas. Retention ponds (areas that temporarily hold water) are located within many residential areas. Some of the retention ponds are used informally as recreational open space. Efert Park is an example of a Lan-Oak Park District facility that includes a detention pond. This pond has been transformed into a recreational amenity as a fishing area.

**Figure 6.44. Green Infrastructure Vision**

**Figure 6.45. Watershed and Floodplain**

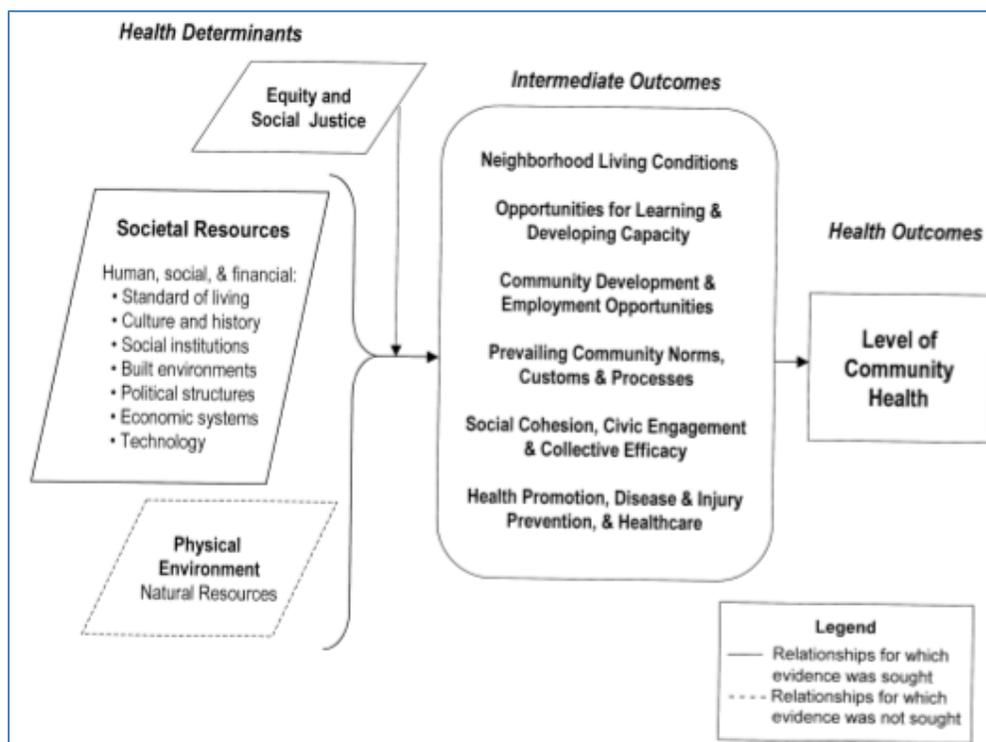
## Section 7: Benefits of Parks

This section presents a view of the benefits of parks and open space in the Lansing community. It includes a discussion focused upon the general benefits of parks and a more detailed discussion regarding the connection between parks and public health. Many sources were used to compile this section including GO TO 2040, CMAP's "Preservation of Parks and Open Space Lands Strategy" and information written by the Cook County Department of Public Health. This section highlights key benefits associated with parks, including environmental, social, public health, and economic benefits.

- A. Environmental
- B. Social
- C. Public Health
- D. Economic

The following figure helps to illustrate the many benefits of parks including intermediate outcomes and overall health outcomes:

**Figure 7.1: The Community Guide's Social Environment and Health Model<sup>17</sup>**



<sup>17</sup> Anderson, L. M. et al. (2003). *The community guide's model for linking the social environment to health*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 24(3, Supplement), 12-20. Journal of Preventive Medicine, 24(3, Supplement), 12-20.

## Key Findings

The following are key findings regarding the benefits of parks and recreation:

- **Parks and recreation have numerous environmental benefits.** Examples of the benefits provided by parks and open space include improved water and air quality, increases in biodiversity and habitat protection, and reductions in greenhouse gases (GHG).
- **Access to parks and recreation can reduce risk for chronic diseases through strategies that encourage active living, healthy eating, and tobacco-free environments.** The health benefits of active living are numerous and well documented, and include reduced obesity, lowered risk of disease, stronger bones, enhanced immune system, and improved academic performance for youth. Parks and recreation opportunities play a particularly important role in promoting the health and well-being of youth.
- **Parks and recreation increase interaction and understanding between individuals, families and community.** The open space, parks and recreational areas, as well as programming, provide opportunities for togetherness and sharing that promote closer, healthier relationships within the family and with people of different races, ethnicities and cultures.
- **Parks and recreation have economic benefits.** Studies support the fact that the proximity to parks and open space improves property values. Homebuyers, businesses, and employers are attracted to high-quality communities of which parks and recreation is often an indicator.

## Environmental Benefits

Benefits like improved water and air quality, increases in biodiversity and habitat protection, and reductions in greenhouse gases (GHG), are all inherent preserving open space. However, environmental benefits are often difficult to quantify and may not receive as much consideration as those which are easily quantifiable. This subsection identifies and describes key environmental benefits related to parks and open space.

### ***Improved Air Quality***

By protecting open space and creating parks, trees and other vegetation are also preserved and protected, often planted. This vegetation plays a significant role in improving air quality in the region. In an area with 100% tree cover, such as contiguous forest stands within parks, trees can remove from the air as much as 15% of the ozone, 14% of the sulfur dioxide, 8% of the nitrogen oxide, and 0.05% of the CO.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Paul M. Sherer (2006). [\*The Benefits of Parks: Why America needs more City Parks and Open Spaces\*](#). The Trust for Public Land.

Another benefit from parks and open space is the capacity that leaf cover and vegetation have for filtering air pollutants such as dust, gases and soot.<sup>19</sup> This is both an environmental and public health benefit that is significant to highly urbanized areas like the northeastern Illinois region. Open space may be used as a noise barrier or buffer zone when the need for noise control arises due to the proximity of incompatible uses (e.g. frequently-travelled highway next to a residential area). In such case, a linear open space with tree cover may serve to reduce the noise as well as the pollution emitted from the highway.

### ***Climate Change***

Temperatures in urban areas have increased by about 0.5-3.0°C over the last 100 years. This is termed "heat island effect" and can exacerbate air pollutant problems and lead to increased energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Trees and parks can offset or even reverse the heat-island effect, both directly and indirectly. Planting trees has the direct effect of reducing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> because each individual tree directly sequesters carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis. According to a study focused on the greater Chicago region, 1 acre of tree cover absorbs 2.2 tons of carbon per year.<sup>20</sup>

Planting trees in cities also has an indirect effect on CO<sub>2</sub> by reducing the demand for energy, and thereby reducing emissions from power plants. Parks and trees can reduce building energy use by lowering summertime temperatures, shading buildings during the summer, and blocking winter winds. According to a study focused on the region, increasing tree cover by 10% could reduce total heating and cooling energy use by 5-10%.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Improved Water Quality***

Preserving open lands and creating parkland preserves natural processes of infiltration and limits imperviousness, both of which are intimately linked to stormwater management and water quality. A study from 1993 by the Illinois State Water Survey estimated the value of open space for floodplain storage, including wastewater reclamation, pollution abatement and aquifer recharge as more than \$52,000 per acre in the Chicago region.<sup>22</sup>

As the amount of imperviousness increases in a watershed, the velocity and volume of stormwater runoff increases, which can have several environmental impacts: increased flooding, erosion, and pollutant loads in receiving waters; decreased groundwater recharge and level of water table; altered stream beds and flows; and impaired aquatic habitat. Research has verified the strength of this correlation between the amount of imperviousness in a drainage

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<sup>19</sup> Givoni, B. "[Impact of Planted Areas on Urban Environmental Quality: A Review](#)," Atmospheric Environment Vol. 25B, No. 3, pp. 289-299, 1991

<sup>20</sup> McPherson, E. Gregory; Nowak, David J.; Rowntree, Rowan A. eds. 1994. Chicago's urban forest ecosystem: results of the Chicago Urban Forest Climate Project. Gen. Tech. Rep. NE-186. Radnor, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station: 201 p.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Illinois Environmental Council, 2007

basin and water quality, with an accepted 10% imperviousness threshold, above which water quality becomes impaired.<sup>23</sup>

Preserving open space and creating parks and greenways are key tools to limit imperviousness and create riparian buffers in a watershed. These programs are often the specific means of implementing larger growth management goals, but can also be seen as one of the most cost-effective means for reducing and managing stormwater runoff and protecting water quality.<sup>24</sup> By focusing efforts to preserve and protect open space to those lands around waterways, water quality goals can coincide with growth management goals. These riparian lands are often targeted for open space protection for other reasons – they offer good habitat or are aesthetically appealing – but they help protect water quality as well, serving as buffers for stormwater runoff, or preserving natural infiltration processes.

## Social Benefits

Properly designed open space, specifically urban parks, may help in creating social ties and a sense of community in an area. This is significant in lower income areas as the parks provide an alternative recreation and entertainment outlet that might not otherwise be available to that sector of the population. According to a 2002 poll by the Illinois Association of Park Districts, more than 80 percent of residents, in Chicago and collar counties, said that they visited a park in the past year, averaging more than a dozen visits.<sup>25</sup>

Parks can also foster community among nearby residents. A study of Chicago public housing residents found that "compared to residents living adjacent to relatively barren spaces, individuals living adjacent to greener common spaces had more social activities and more visitors, knew more of their neighbors, reported their neighbors were more concerned with helping and supporting one another, and had strong feelings of belonging".<sup>26</sup> According to another expert, "Urban boundary parks like Warren Park [in Chicago's West Ridge community area] may provide the kind of setting to nurture healthy interracial and ethnic relationships, especially among children and young adults".<sup>27</sup>

Well-planned parks can also build social capital not only by providing central meeting places or cultural cohesion for surrounding neighborhoods, but also by modeling healthy behavior, like

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<sup>23</sup> Schueler, T. 2000. Clearing and Grading Regulations Exposed: The Practice of Watershed Protection. Center for Watershed Protection, Ellicott City, MD. Pages 315-316

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Illinois Environmental Council, 2007

<sup>26</sup> Kuo, Frances E. "Coping with Poverty: Impacts of Environment and Attention in the Inner City" *Environment and Behavior*, Vol. 33 No. 1, January 2001 (pp. 5-34)

<sup>27</sup> Paul H. Gobster, "Urban Parks as Green Magnets? Interracial Relations in Neighborhood Boundary Parks," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 41 (1998) pp. 43-55

exercise, to the community at large.<sup>28</sup> The community-building aspect of parks can translate directly to issues of safety and social order. Recreational facilities provide at-risk youth with safe venues to socialize; places where they occupy time that might otherwise be spent on the streets. For example, some communities have benefited from midnight basketball programs that allow youths a late-night alternative to "finding trouble".<sup>29</sup>

## Public Health

The public health benefits of parks are substantial. Higher concentrations of community recreational areas like "public parks, play spaces, hiking/biking trails and exercise facilities" can cause a 25 percent increase in the number of people who are physically active at least three times a week.<sup>30</sup> In one study, subjects who regularly used their local parks were "nearly three times as likely as others to achieve recommended levels of activity, regardless of how it was measured".<sup>31</sup> Greenways also yielded positive results, prompting an increase in exercise among 55 percent of survey respondents that used a new trail in southeastern Missouri. Greenway users in Indiana reported similar increases.<sup>32</sup> Parks even bridge gaps between public health and social equity by providing exercise facilities to low-income residents who may find gym fees prohibitive.<sup>33</sup>

Lansing residents are confronted by a number of complex (see a more detailed discussion in **Appendix B**) and challenging health and social issues, which parks and recreation can play an integral role in addressing. Parks and recreation are vitally important to promote vibrant, healthier and equitable communities by establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and especially youth, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and region. Local parks and recreation

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<sup>28</sup> Ariane L. Bedimo-Rung, Andrew J. Mowen, Deborah A. Cohen (2005). [\*The Significance of Parks to Physical Activity and Public Health: A Conceptual Model\*](#). American Journal of Preventive Medicine 2005;28(2S2):159–168

<sup>29</sup> Paul M. Sherer (2006). [\*The Benefits of Parks: Why America needs more City Parks and Open Spaces\*](#). The Trust for Public Land.

<sup>30</sup> Ewing, S. A., Sutter, B., Amundson, R., Owen, J., Nishiizumi, K., Sharp, W., Cliff, S. S., Perry, K., Dietrich, W. E. and McKay, C. P. (2006), A threshold in soil formation at Earth's arid-hyperarid transition. *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta* 70(21), 5293-5322, doi: 10.1016/j.gca.2006.08.020.

<sup>31</sup> Billie Giles-Corti, Melissa H. Broomhall, Matthew Knuiman, Catherine Collins, Kate Douglas, Kevin Ng, Andrea Lange, Robert J. Donovan (2005). *Increasing Walking: How Important Is Distance To, Attractiveness, and Size of Public Open Space?* American Journal of Preventive Medicine, volume 28(2S2):169–176

<sup>32</sup> Erica Gies (2006). [\*The Health Benefits of Parks: How Parks Help Keep Americans and Their Communities Fit and Healthy\*](#). The Trust for Public Land.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

agencies are not just about playgrounds; they are places that have proven physical, mental and social benefits for individuals and communities.

Chronic diseases are among the most preventable health problems and share many common risk factors, including obesity, unhealthy eating, physical inactivity and tobacco, as well as underlying social, economic and environmental determinants of health<sup>34</sup>

Parks and recreation support risk reduction for chronic diseases through various strategies that encourage active living, healthy eating, and tobacco-free environments<sup>35</sup>. The health benefits of active living are numerous and well documented, and include reduced obesity, lowered risk of disease, stronger bones, enhanced immune system, and improved academic performance for youth. Access to open spaces and quality recreational facilities and programs, both of which are directly linked to increased physical activity, is central to the mission of parks. Mental health benefits, like reduced depression and anxiety, improved mood, reduced stress and increased self-esteem and life satisfaction have been associated with physical activity and/or contact with open and natural spaces.<sup>36,37</sup>

Aside from physical activity, healthy eating plays a role in chronic disease prevention and helps people maintain a healthy weight<sup>38</sup>. Park districts across the nation have supported policies and programs that support increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, reduced consumption of sugar-loaded beverages and energy-dense, high caloric foods, and increased breastfeeding<sup>39</sup>. Lastly, tobacco free parks result in a healthier atmosphere for park users by limiting their overall exposure to secondhand smoke, and by minimizing their exposure to tobacco in the places where they play which reinforces a tobacco free norm<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Robinson, K. et al. (2007). *From heart health promotion to chronic disease prevention: Contributions of the Canadian Heart Health Initiative*. Preventing Chronic Disease, 4(2). Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/apr/06\\_0076.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/apr/06_0076.htm)

<sup>35</sup> National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). *Parks build health communities: Success stories*. Retrieved from [http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpaorg/Grants\\_and\\_Partners/Recreation\\_and\\_Health/Resources/Case\\_Studies/Healthy-Communities-Success-Stories.pdf](http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpaorg/Grants_and_Partners/Recreation_and_Health/Resources/Case_Studies/Healthy-Communities-Success-Stories.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Healthy Communities by Design. (n.d.). *Health impacts*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthycommunitiesbydesign.org/Content/10010/HealthImpacts.html>

<sup>37</sup> California State Parks. (2005). *The health and social benefits of recreation*. Retrieved from [http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/health\\_benefits\\_081505.pdf](http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/health_benefits_081505.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). *Nutrition and physical activity: Helping people choose healthy eating and active living*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/aag/nutrition.htm>

<sup>39</sup> National Recreation and Park Associations. (n.d.) *Health and wellness*. Retrieved from <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Health-and-Wellness/?Overlay>

<sup>40</sup> Community Preventive Services Task Force. (2012). *Reducing tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure: Smoke-free policies*. Retrieved from <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/tobacco/RRsmokefreepolicies.html>

## Economic Benefits

Parks and open space are often evaluated by levels of conserved land or recreational facilities. Less obvious benefits can be found in municipal revenues and the balance sheets of nearby businesses. Well-planned parks and open lands are linked to increased property values, more efficient use of public resources, and healthier local economies where implemented. In short, public parks are often financial assets.<sup>41</sup>

### **Land Value**

In 25 studies of properties surrounding parks, 20 correlated the parks' presences with increased property values.<sup>42</sup> According to a 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors by Public Opinion Strategies, 50 percent of respondents said they would pay 10 percent more for a house located near a park or open space.<sup>43</sup> There is a close relationship between housing prices and proximity to urban environmental amenities.<sup>44</sup> However, the opposite is true of properties near poorly maintained parks.<sup>45</sup> The greatest home value premiums seem to occur within 800 feet of a park.<sup>46</sup> Results also vary depending on the size of an open area, purpose and whether it is located in the city or the suburbs.

Land value increases with proximity to open space depending on the size and state of the space. For example, the report states that in Chicago, Millennium Park has been attributed with a \$1.4 billion boost to local residential development and millions more in tourist dollars.<sup>47</sup>

Economics Research Associates (ERA) was hired by the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) in 2005 to highlight research literature relating to the real estate impacts generated by proximity to parks and recreation in Illinois. The literature review found that neighborhood and community parks have a potentially positive impact on surrounding residential communities.<sup>48</sup> Based on studies reviewed by ERA, the following benefits were determined:

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<sup>41</sup> CMAP's "Preservation of Parks and Open Lands Strategy" Page 21

<sup>42</sup> Paul M. Sherer (2006). [\*The Benefits of Parks: Why America needs more City Parks and Open Spaces\*](#). The Trust for Public Land.

<sup>43</sup> CMAP's "Preservation of Parks and Open Lands Strategy" Page 21

<sup>44</sup> JunJie Wu and Andrew J. Plantinga (2002). [\*The influence of public open space on urban spatial structure\*](#). Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Oregon State University. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 46 (2003) 288-309.

<sup>45</sup> Paul M. Sherer (2006). [\*The Benefits of Parks: Why America needs more City Parks and Open Spaces\*](#). The Trust for Public Land.

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Nicholls. [\*Measuring the Impact of Parks on Property Values\*](#). National Recreation and Park Association (2004). *Parks & Recreation Magazine*, March 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.nrpa.org/content/default.aspx?documentId=1013>

<sup>47</sup> Goodman Williams Group and URS Corporation, "Millennium Park Economic Impact Study," Prepared for the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, April 21, 2005

<sup>48</sup> ERA's Real Estate Impact Review of Parks and Recreation (2005)

- Neighborhood parks can provide up to a 20% increase in housing values for those homes facing the park. Benefits from a neighborhood park can extend to approximately 600 feet, with houses nearer to the park receiving the majority of the benefit.
- Community parks may provide benefits up to 33% of the residential real estate value. Homes within 1,000 feet of a large community park may receive a 9% increase in home value. Positive externalities of a community park may extend up to 2,000 feet.

According to Dr. Crompton, the “proximate principle” states that the market value of properties located proximate to a park or open space (POS) are frequently higher than comparable properties located elsewhere. The higher value of these properties means that their owners pay higher property taxes. The increment of those taxes that is attributable to the POS may be used to retire bonds issued to acquire, develop or renovate it. In some cases, the increment is sufficient to fully meet these debt charges.<sup>49</sup>

Homes that are within walking distance of a park can increase a home’s value.<sup>50</sup> The higher level a level a home’s ‘walkability’ -- proximity to parks, schools, shopping and other amenities – the more it can increase a home’s value. The report, “Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Housing Values in US Cities” (2009) analyzed data from 94,000 real estate transactions in 15 major markets provided by ZipRealty and found that in 13 of the 15 markets, higher levels of walkability, as measured by Walk Score, were directly linked to higher home values.

INSERT IN A CALL OUT BOX -- Walkability is defined by the Walk Score algorithm ([www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com)), which works by calculating the closest amenities – restaurants, coffee shops, schools, parks, stores, libraries, etc. – to any U.S. address. The algorithm then assigns a “Walk Score” from 0-100, with 100 being the most walkable and 0 being totally car-dependent. Walk Scores of 70+ indicate neighborhoods where it’s possible to get by without a car. By the Walk Score measure, walkability is a direct function of how many destinations are located within a short distance (generally between one-quarter mile and one mile of a home). (Source: Cortright, 2009)

### **Regional Economy**

Communities throughout the country have invested in parks and open space to strengthen their ability to attract businesses and employment opportunities. Many companies look at the overall quality of life within a community when deciding upon where to relocate or set-up a new business. The thought being that if a business locates within a community considered to have a high-quality of life that they will be able to attract and retain high-quality employees. Several studies have been conducted to show what factors are important to attracting

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<sup>49</sup> The Impact of Parks and Open Spaces on Property Values” by Dr. Crompton, 2007, page 32

<sup>50</sup> Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Housing Values in US Cities (2009) Joseph Cortright.

employees. For example, a survey of 1,200 high technology workers in 1998 by KPMG found that quality of life in a community increases the attractiveness of a job by 33 percent.<sup>51</sup>

According to CMAP's report parks and open space have also proved beneficial to labor and capital. One study states that parks and conservation areas in Illinois compose a \$3 billion industry that employs 62,900 people who earn a collective \$621.8 million in wages and benefits. These include 4,000 construction jobs, which pay a total of \$185 million. This accounts for \$16.7 million in state income taxes. Illinois businesses, suppliers and contractors capture about 73 percent of park agency annual spending, or \$347 million."<sup>52</sup>

Many park jobs also provide a gateway into the working world for local youth who find employment as camp counselors, lifeguards and maintenance workers. In Chicago, the Garfield Park Alliance embraces this with a two-year docent program for area high school students.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> APA City Parks Forum, Economic Development, 2002

<sup>52</sup> Economics Research Associates (2005). [\*Real Estate Impact Review of Parks and Recreation\*](#). Illinois Association of Park Districts, March 25, 2005. ERA Project Number: 15543

<sup>53</sup> "Beyond Recreation - Understanding Park Usership," by Chris Walker, The Wallace Foundation and the Urban Land Institute, 2004

## Section 8: Moving Forward

This section presents the key recommendations that should be considered in the Master Plan. The intent that the recommendations will address the issues, and build upon the opportunities that have been presented in this Existing Conditions Report. Therefore, the Lan-Oak Park District Master Plan will address the following topic areas moving forward.

- **Improve the District's finances.** Throughout the existing conditions report the District's inability to undertake capital improvements has been raised. According to staff only \$125,000 is available each year for improvements. The Master Plan will assist the District by including analysis and recommendations that support the need for additional revenue in order to maintain its existing facilities, and ultimately to add new desired facilities into the system. The Master Plan will also include potential grant opportunities and partnerships that could help to fund capital improvements.
- **Focus on the maintenance of existing facilities.** The Master Plan will include recommendations to assist the District in prioritizing ongoing maintenance efforts. For example, the Master Plan will include a prioritized list of strategic and problematic parks, such as the former pool, where increased maintenance or redevelopment would have the largest benefit for the community.
- **Identify areas where new parks and/or facilities are needed.** Using national standards, the Plan will identify if there are underserved areas within the Park District. This analysis will include both acreage and types of facility recommendations. The Plan will consider converting parcels that are currently vacant or underutilized into new park sites. The Master Plan will also consider the addition of new recreational amenities on existing Village-owned parcels that may be appropriate. In addition, are there current parks that could be considered for potential sale/removal due to their underutilization, location, and/or community input? The Master Plan will consider the cost per acre of land in Lansing and the impact a park's removal may have in a neighborhood.
- **Continue to support public health initiatives.** The Park District currently provides a number of programs and opportunities that improve the health of Lansing. In addition to supporting existing park district health programs, the Master Plan will include additional objectives and recommendations created with the assistance of the Cook County Department of Public Health.
- **Support Pennsy Greenway and trail development.** The Park District should continue to work with the Village and other communities in the expansion of Pennsy Greenway and trail connections. Trails can be off-street, or on-street (as recommended in the District's 2009 Bikeway Plan). Preliminary recommendations include the implementation of the Village's trail plan (included in the Village's Comprehensive Plan 2014) which identifies many new off-street trails along utilities. For example, the plan recommends creating a trail along the north-south utility right-of-way from I-94 to Lansing Woods and along the vacated rail and the east-west utility right-of-way from Wentworth Avenue to Lansing Woods.

- **Complete Park Plaza.** The District should continue to seek funding to develop Park Plaza as envisioned. Its prominent location within Downtown Lansing creates many opportunities to strengthen Lansing's image, identity, and sense of place.
- **Strengthen partnerships.** The Park District already partners with many groups to provide parks and recreation in the community including the Lansing Old Timers, the Village, the Chamber, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and School District #171. The Master Plan will identify areas where the Park District could strengthen or add to its current partnerships. Preliminary partnerships and agreements that may be recommended include: maintenance agreements with the Village; and recreational or programming use agreements (both indoor and outdoor space) with the School District(s). A specific example of a project that will require improved cooperation between the Village and the Park District is in implementing the 2009 Bikeway Plan recommendations. Many of the trails are on-street, and therefore under the jurisdiction of the Village. Unfortunately since 2009, the Village has resurfaced and improved streets without including the recommended bike facilities.
- **Study the potential of additional annexations to expand the park district service area.** There are a number of unincorporated parcels adjacent to the Park District. Moving forward, the District may undertake a more detailed analysis to determine if additional annexations into the Park District are desired by residents and/or financially beneficially to the District.
- **The Master Plan should become an educational and marketing tool for the Park District.** The Master Plan will include analysis and recommendations that will assist the District in communicating the importance of parks and recreation in the community. This is one of the preliminary goals of the Park District staff for creating an updated Master Plan. The Plan will include a discussion regarding the connection between parks and health. It will also identify the importance of parks and recreation in connection with economic value, stability, and the growth of Lansing.

# Appendix A

## Steering Committee Meetings

A Master Plan Steering Committee has been created for this project. The Steering Committee is tasked with providing guidance and feedback on existing issues and opportunities, developing central goals, reviewing plan documents, and identifying stakeholders who should be involved in the planning process. Members of the Steering Committee include:

- Kristi DeLaurentiis, Village of Lansing (*no longer employed at the Village*)
- Sharon Desjardins, Lan-Oak Park District staff member
- Mike Fish, Former Lan-Oak Park District Board member
- Patrick Gulotta, Lan-Oak Park District Board member
- Jo-Ellyn Kelley, Lansing Association for Community Events
- John Kelly, Lan-Oak Park District Board member
- Maureen Mason, Lansing Public Library
- Erin Meegan-Polanski, Lansing Chamber of Commerce
- Gina Massuda Barnett, Cook County Department of Public Health
- Dan Podgorski, Lansing Old Timers
- Bob Tropp, Lan-Oak Park District Board member
- John Wilson, Lan-Oak Park District staff member

The first steering committee meeting was held on October 2, 2013 at the Eisenhower Fitness and Community Center. At the meeting, committee members were introduced to the project and discussed important issues and opportunities faced by the Park District. The following list highlights comments and input received from members at that meeting.

### ***Strengths of the Park District:***

- Volunteers to help out with various efforts and activities
- Residents and businesses support
- Park District staff and elected officials support
- Indoor facilities and programming
- A large variety and number of programs are offered
- The Park District and the Village are working together on the Master Plan as well as the Village's Comprehensive Plan
- Park Plaza has excellent potential to help anchor the Downtown
- Bike trail system
- Community festivals
- A number of parks located throughout Lansing's neighborhoods
- New improvements to baseball field
- Erfert Park's climbing hill

### ***Issues or concerns about the Park District:***

- Poor financial condition, especially lack of funds to make capital improvements

- A Park District referendum failed last year—significant education/marketing campaign would need to be done to seek another
- The Park District pool has been closed, which has resulted in a poor image and eyesore for the District.
- Poor park maintenance—some playgrounds have had to be removed for safety reasons.
- Limited staff
- There is a feeling that some residents no longer value parks and recreation.

***New projects that should be developed:***

- Park Plaza improvements
- Splash pad
- Storywalk
- Clean restroom facilities
- Catch-and-release fishing area
- Bike trail system expansion
- Bike racks
- Dog park
- Potential partnership opportunities with other agencies and/or taxing bodies
- Expand the Park District boundaries into unincorporated areas

## **Key Person Interviews**

In order to gain further insight into issues and opportunities that exist in the Park District, CMAP staff conducted interviews with several key stakeholders. These individuals represented a wide variety of interests and perspectives including Park District staff, sports groups and affiliations, residents, and representatives from community organizations.

Collectively, these stakeholders brought up community needs that they hope the Master Plan will address, ranging from issues with the physical environment to the District’s financial situation and how the District promotes health. The following list highlights comments and input received during the interviews:

***Strengths of the Park District***

- A number of recreational programs and activities are available for all ages
- Offers access to several greenspaces
- Organizes and hosts events
- The Park District is trying to make Park Plaza a destination place by hosting programs and events at the location
- The access to the Pennsy Greenway bike trail supports active transportation
- The Park District embraces diversity and is inclusive of all residents regardless of ethnic background
- The Park District maximizes dollars to the best extent possible in spite of the limited funds available
- The Park District does a good job at maintaining the park and equipment

- The Park District exhibits a strong sense of community
- The Park District publicizes the fall and spring programs, and mails them to each household in Lansing
- The Eisenhower Fitness and Community Center

### ***Park District Issues***

- Provide access to washroom facilities.
- Re-install basketball hoops on courts where they are missing.
- Install more play structures in parks.
- There is a need to improve the maintenance of the parks and facilities.
- The facilities at the Eisenhower Center and at some of the parks need to be updated (e.g., washroom facilities, fitness gym, etc.). Also, Eisenhower's hours need to be extended.
- The Eisenhower Center is not fully utilized (e.g., indoor pool).
- Although the Park District has several greenspaces, very few parks have destination-type facilities (e.g., Winterhoff Park).
- The farmers' market, a much-needed amenity, was discontinued. If it's revived, the market should accept Link card.
- The Pennsy Greenway bike trail is underutilized among residents and non-residents of Lansing. There is a need to promote the trail throughout Lansing and surrounding areas.
- There is a lack of participation among residents. It is a challenge to get non-White resident participation at Park District events. The Park District needs to expand its sense of community.
- The Park District does not have the wide variety of programs and activities it did in the past.
- Residents are disinterested in Park District programs and activities. There is apathy from the public about taking advantage of these programs
- Perception of Park District funding needs to change so that more residents would support an increase in funding.
- There is a conflict of interest between the Park District and the Old Timers—a private organization with a separate board but uses park facilities at no charge to run its program.
- Park safety
- Costs of activities are expensive
- Outdoor space and indoor space for basketball are limited. Eisenhower Center is the only option for indoor basketball but only so many people can be allowed into the gym at a given time.
- The afterschool program should have extended hours and be adjusted to accommodate student transportation needs.
- Lack of access to transportation within close proximity to the Eisenhower Center.
- There is a need for more fun activities for children and youth. Summer activities should also be expanded for these age groups.
- Limited tax base to support park development.

- The need to increase transparency of Park District budget (e.g., publicize quarterly reports).
- Lower the costs of programming and activities so that activities can be accessed by all.

***Areas in Lansing where there is a lack of parks or recreational facilities:***

- Winterhoff Park needs to be improved to accommodate youth in the neighborhoods as well as those who attend the nearby Patti Leach Youth Center.

***Opportunities that the Park District could take advantage of:***

- Create or partner with a booster organize that could serve as a link to residents
- Establish a campaign that allows community resident select a park, adopt it and raise resources to improve it.
- Form partnerships with the school districts to provide gym time for students or support sports activities like basketball.
- To increase use of Park Plaza, the park district should continue to utilize the space.
- Create a walking/biking trail along the levee system that protects the Little Calumet River.

***Ways that the Park District promotes health:***

- There are opportunities for physical activities to promote health.
- There are opportunities for health education through the Park District's cooking classes.

***How the Park District can improve its promotion of health:***

- Provide more recreational facilities.
- Establish a bike program, where bikes can be rented and/or an activity that promotes bike riding.
- Organize more competitive physical activities (e.g., races).
- Serve healthy food options at events.
- Install a trailhead on the Pennsy Greenway Trail so that people can park their cars and then take a bike ride, walk, run or skate along the trail.
- Install paved walking paths around the larger parks.

***New projects that should be developed:***

- Renovate or eliminate the public swimming pool.
- The Park District should become more visible if the District wants to pass the referendum to get funding.
- The Park District should reach residents whom they are currently not connected with. It's imperative for LOPD to not concentrate all park activities at the Eisenhower Center. Staff should go outside the Park District facilities and connect with residents. LOPD staff should consider conducting activities along Ridge Road to meet residents.
- Improve the park areas with facilities and equipment.
- Create destination places for community gathering.
- Establish a campaign to allow community residents to adopt a park and raise resources to improve it, similar to Schultz Park.

- Fix Park District equipment (e.g. television at Eisenhower center).
- Install a dog park or skate park at Winterhoff Park.
- Place another referendum on the ballot. Like in the past, the Park District should work with different groups to promote the referendum.
- Create a dog park.

## Community Workshop

On November 13, 2013, the Park District hosted the “*Creating a Healthier South Suburban Community*” workshop to understand the links between community development and health. This workshop was one of three taking place in the Chicago metropolitan region during fall of 2013; others were held on the South Side of Chicago and in Aurora. The workshops were built off of the Healthy Communities Summit held in Chicago in June 2013 at the Federal Reserve Bank, where nearly 100 stakeholders came together to share ideas related to community development and health.

Throughout the workshop residents shared how park districts could positively impact resident health, including:

- Host an annual health fair
- Offer more free fitness programs to the community
- Address health through programming and activities

This effort was led by the Illinois Public Health Institute. Other organizations involved included the Cook County Department of Public Health, Adler School of Professional Psychology Institute on Social Exclusion, Access Community Health Network, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, LISC/Chicago, The Chicago Community Trust, the Northern Illinois Public Health Consortium, and CMAP.

## Community Survey

CMAP and the Cook County Department of Public Health worked with Park District staff to develop and administer a community survey. The survey was available on-line and the link to access the survey was publicized at various locations throughout the community including the Park District website, Village of Lansing website, and Northwest Indiana Times. The survey was available for nearly two months between November 2013 and January 2014. Below are key findings from the survey, which contained questions that focused on general opinions, usage and quality of parks as well as facilities, future needs and improvements, and demographics. The survey also included questions about programs and events. Given that the Master Plan will not offer recommendations on the Park District programs and events, this section will not include related survey results concerning programming. However, detailed programming results will be included in the final appendix and a copy of all survey responses will be provided to the Park District staff.

**General Opinions about the Park District**

The majority of survey respondents were either somewhat familiar, familiar, or very familiar with the Park District. Over two-thirds of respondents hear about the Park District through its seasonal guide. Nearly 95% of the survey respondents consider the Park District to be important to them. When asked about their level of satisfaction of the Park District parks and facilities, majority of respondents are satisfied or do not have an opinion.

When asked to what degree they agree or disagree with the following statements that describe the Park District, respondents gave the following responses:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Park District is one of the best things about living in Lansing.	9.09%	22.08%	35.06%	28.57%	5.19%
The Park District is an excellent recreation resource.	4.11%	26.03%	24.66%	35.62%	9.59%

Majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that the Park District contributes to the quality of life and overall health of Lansing by:

- Providing residents with spaces to be physically active, socialize, relax, build community and connect with the natural environment;
- Promoting tobacco-free environments at parks and facilities;
- Providing facilities that reach all age groups;
- Providing programs and events that reach all age groups.

Areas that the Park District might want to consider improving as it relates to contributing to the quality of life and overall health of Lansing include:

- Offering healthy food and beverage options at events and in vending machines;
- Providing facilities that meet the cultural needs of the Lansing community;
- Providing programs and events that meet the cultural needs of the Lansing community;
- Linking Lansing residents with other resources and services;
- Providing opportunities for Lansing residents to provide suggestions and feedback to the Park District, fostering a sense of community ownership of the park district.

**Usage and quality of LOPD facilities**

In the last 12 months, how frequently have you or a member of your household used the Park District parks?	
Never	6.76%
Rarely	18.92%
Occasionally	33.78%
A good amount of time	24.32%
A great deal	16.22%

Respondents rated the overall quality of each park:

- Gus Bock Park – fair and poor

- Erfert Park - good and fair
- Flanagan Park – fair
- Heritage Park – fair
- Jaycees Park – fair
- Lan-Oak – good and fair
- Lions Park – mixed
- Oakwood Park – fair
- Potts Park – fair and poor
- Rotary Park – good and fair
- Schultz Park – very good and good
- Stony Ridge – good and fair
- VanLaten Park – good and fair
- Veteran’s Memorial Park – fair
- Volunteers Park – fair
- Whitman Park – fair
- Winterhoff – fair and poor

For the most part, respondents occasionally or rarely use Park District park features. The overall quality of each was rated:

- Ball diamonds or baseball fields – fair and poor
- Basketball courts – fair and poor
- Horseshoe courts – fair and poor
- Picnic area – fair and poor
- Playground equipment – fair and poor
- Skate park – poor
- Tennis courts – fair and poor
- Volleyball courts – poor
- Washroom building – fair and poor

How do you perceive your level of safety when you or a member of your household has used Park District parks?	
Unsafe	17.57%
Somewhat safe	32.43%
Safe	35.14%
Very safe	9.46%
Do not use parks	5.41%

Respondents are discouraged from using Park District parks and facilities because:

- The parks are not well-maintained
- Parks do not have the right equipment
- I use parks outside Lansing
- I do not feel safe
- Security is insufficient
- Facilities are not well-maintained

- Fees are too high.
- Programs and classes often get cancelled
- Quality customer service is lacking

### ***Future needs and improvements***

Respondents shared their level of support for the following park features:

- Ball diamonds or baseball fields – support
- Biking, running, walking, fitness trails – strongly support
- Community gardens – support
- Drinking fountains – support
- Football fields – support
- Gardens/trees – support and strongly support
- Horseshoe courts – support
- Indoor basketball/volleyball courts – support
- Indoor dance and exercise facilities – support
- Indoor ice rink – strongly support
- Indoor swimming pool – strongly support
- Indoor running/walking track – strongly support
- Indoor tennis – mixed feelings
- Large community parks – support, strongly support
- Lighting for athletic facilities and activities – support
- Outdoor ice skating - support
- Outdoor swimming pools – strongly support
- Outdoor water/splash parks – strongly support
- Outdoor tennis courts- support
- Park benches - support
- Picnic areas and shelters – support, strongly support
- Playgrounds – strongly support
- Recreational center – strongly support
- Restroom facilities/washroom buildings – strongly support
- Security lighting – strongly support
- Skateboarding park - support
- Small neighborhood parks - support
- Soccer fields - support
- Volleyball courts - support

Respondents also added the following park features they would like to see:

- A facility that could be rented for parties for larger groups than currently offered
- Batting cages
- Mini golf
- Outdoor concert venue
- Re-opening the outdoor pool
- Turf softball and baseball fields

Respondents also shared additional written responses, including:

- Lack of access to restroom facilities
- Lack of playground equipment and other park features like water fountains and benches
- Need for a dog park

Respondents commented on what they would like to see done with Park Plaza:

- Band shell for seasonal concerts
- Covered picnic area
- Dog park
- Get rid of it
- Nicer picnic benches, more shrubs, maybe a beautiful community garden. Keep up the Farmer's Market
- Roller skating rink in warm weather or Ice skating ring in the colder months. Movies at the park is also a good choice
- Splash pad
- Utilize it for restaurants or shopping and relocate the park area

Potential actions to improve the Park District:

- Acquire additional property for parks and facilities – no support
- Develop new and connect existing walking/biking paths – support/strongly support
- Fix up/repair older park buildings and facilities – strongly support
- Replace outdoor swimming pool – strongly support
- Sell some properties to help upgrade others – support
- Upgrade existing parks – strongly support

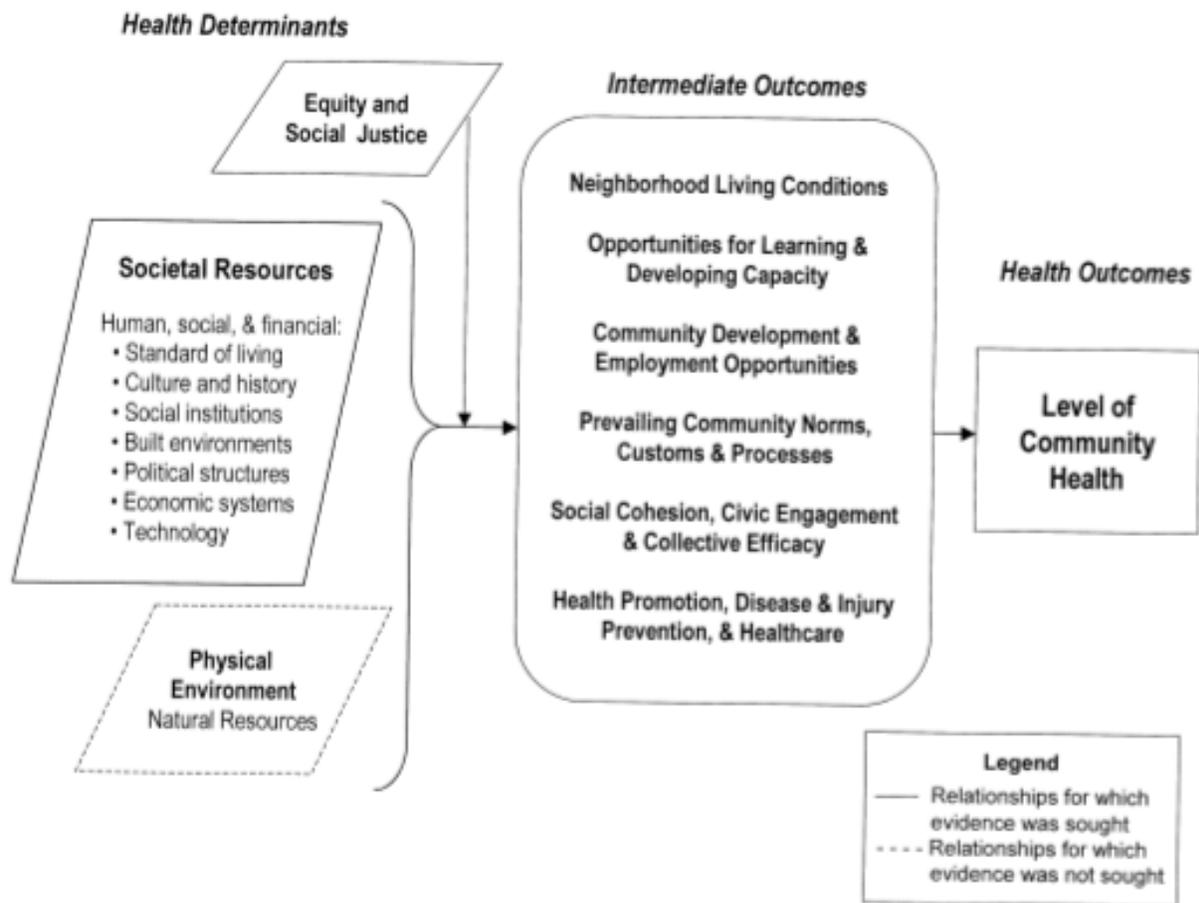
To pay for upgrades: The Park District should seek out other funding sources such as grants.

# Appendix B

## Health Impact Report

The increased understanding that the “environment influences one’s ability to engage in healthy behaviors, receive health care, and protect oneself from direct environmental threats” has permeated both research and public policy discourse<sup>54</sup>. These health-determining conditions are often referred to as upstream or distal factors, antecedents of health, or social determinants of health.

Figure B.1: The Community Guide’s Social Environment and Health Model<sup>55</sup>



<sup>54</sup> US National Academy of Sciences. *U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health*. (2013). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, pg. 97.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, L. M. et al. (2003). *The community guide’s model for linking the social environment to health*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 24(3, Supplement), 12-20. Journal of Preventive Medicine, 24(3, Supplement), 12-20.

## Importance of Place

The importance of place --- meaning the neighborhood, community, region and country where one lives --- cannot be overemphasized in understanding the distribution of health and disease in the population. Place, along with race, continue to be defining characteristics of opportunity<sup>56</sup> --- the conditions or resources encouraging vibrant, healthier communities that more likely support community residents in succeeding and living to their full potential<sup>57</sup>.

Varying opportunities in communities, including, but not limited to, quality of education, affordable housing, and access to open space and recreation, can be associated with differences in health outcomes that, for example, has resulted in a 17-year gap in life expectancy in Cook County, Illinois<sup>58</sup>. Taking into consideration regional geographic patterns of opportunity, Lansing, Illinois in a 2005 report was found to be a low opportunity place based on standard measures for fiscal capacity, access to transportation and jobs, quality of life and school variables<sup>59</sup>.

## Lansing's Community Health Status

This subsection presents a view of the overall health status and related factors associated with Lansing. It is important to note that suburban Cook County measures were used to describe obesity and overweight prevalence, as well as perceived health and related behaviors, since these were not available for Lansing, specifically. The data presented are not expected to be very different among residents in Lansing since the community has experienced similar demographic shifts to suburban Cook County and generally mirrors suburban Cook County in age distribution and racial/ethnic breakdown.

### Overall Health

The overall age-adjusted mortality rate in Lansing is nearly 10% higher than for all of suburban Cook County (799.0 deaths per 100,000 population vs. 727.0 deaths per 100,000 population), and is about 12% lower than the rate for the south suburban Cook County (906.8 deaths per 100,000 population).

Suburban Cook County residents generally describe their health as good to excellent, with only 18% or less than 1 in 5 persons reporting that their health is fair or poor. Closer examination of the data reveals that residents while 10.3% of White residents report fair or poor health, more

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<sup>56</sup> Squires, G. & Kubrin, C. (2005). Privileged places: Race, uneven development and the geography of opportunity in urban America. *Urban Studies*, 42(1), 47-68. doi: 10.1080=0042098042000309694. Retrieved from <http://www.gwu.edu/~soc/docs/Squires-Kubrin.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. (2007). *The geography of opportunity: Austin region*. Retrieved from [http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2007/07\\_2007\\_AustinOppMapping.pdf](http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2007/07_2007_AustinOppMapping.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute and Cook County, Illinois Place Matters Team in conjunction with the Center on Human Needs, Virginia Commonwealth University and Virginia Network for Geospatial Health Research. (2012). *Place matters for health in Cook County: Ensuring opportunities for good health for all*. Washington D.C.: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

<sup>59</sup> Lukehart et al. (2005). *Segregation of opportunity: The structure of advantage and disadvantage in the Chicago region*. Retrieved from [http://www.kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2005/05\\_2005\\_ChicagoComofOppReport.pdf](http://www.kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2005/05_2005_ChicagoComofOppReport.pdf)

than twice as many (22.6%) report this among other race/ethnicities. Moreover, 10% of suburban Cook County residents conveyed that they had poor physical health 14 or more days out of the last 30 days.

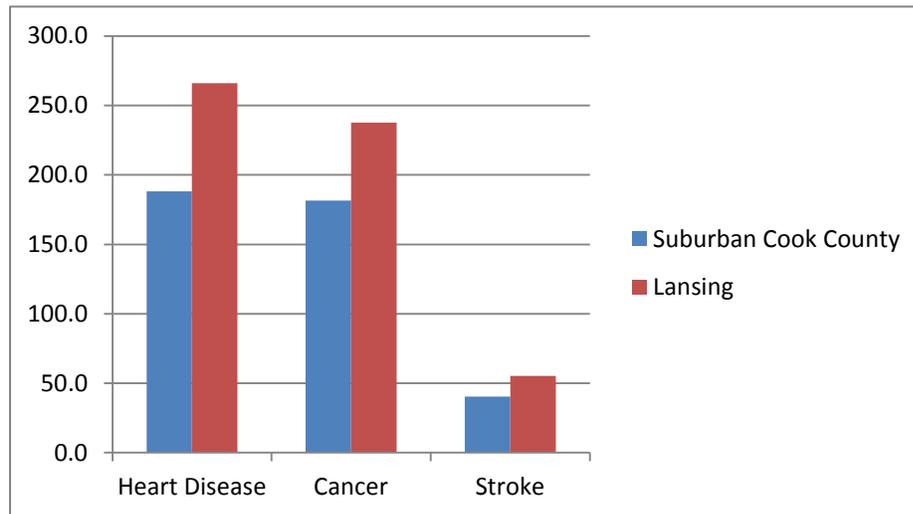
According to the World Health Organization, mental health is “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”<sup>60</sup> Approximately 15% of suburban Cook County residents stated they had poor mental health 14 or more days in the last 30 days.

About 15% or more than 1 in 6 residents of suburban Cook County report having limited in their activities because of physical, mental and emotional problems. Of those persons with disabilities, nearly half (45%) rarely or never receive the social and emotional support they need.

### **Chronic Diseases**

As is true both across suburban Cook County and the nation, chronic diseases are the leading causes of death in Lansing where heart disease, cancer and stroke account for over 60% of all deaths<sup>61</sup>. Corresponding age-adjusted death rates for these chronic diseases are noticeably higher for Lansing than the overall rates for suburban Cook County. For example, the age-adjusted heart disease mortality rate for Lansing (283.6 deaths per 100,000 population) is more than 40% higher than the corresponding rate for suburban Cook County as a whole. (Figure #.#)

**Figure B.1: Comparison of 2006-2008 Age-Adjusted Rates (per 100,000) for Heart Disease, Cancer and Stroke between Lansing and Suburban Cook County, Illinois**



<sup>60</sup> World Health Organization. *Mental health*. (2014). Retrieved from [http://www.who.int/topics/mental\\_health/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/topics/mental_health/en/index.html)

<sup>61</sup> Illinois Department of Public Health. (n.d.). Death Pull File 2006-2008.

In addition to deaths from chronic disease, nearly 50% of Americans live with at least one chronic illness<sup>62</sup>. For example, one in four (25%) adults in suburban Cook County is obese (BMI >30), and another four out of 10 (40%) are overweight (BMI > 25). The high rates of rise in obesity may further account for increases in diabetes prevalence, which is expected to double in the next 25 years and result in a tripling of healthcare expenditures associated with diabetes management, care and complications. Chronic diseases may lower the quality of life a person lives by, for example, limiting function, health, activity and work<sup>63</sup>. Lower income levels, educational attainment and access to resources increase the likelihood of chronic diseases, which are also disproportionately experienced by poorer and minority populations<sup>64</sup>.

Most chronic diseases are preventable, due to common preventable risk factors like smoking, physical inactivity, poor diet, and overuse of alcohol . In suburban Cook County, one in five adults still smoke cigarettes. Data further indicate that adults have unhealthy diets with low consumption of fruits and vegetables and excess intake of calories consisting of low-nutritional food and beverages; and low levels of physical activity. Additionally, the rate of binge drinking (i.e. 5 or more drinks on one occasion) among adults in suburban Cook County (32.4%) is nearly two times greater than the rate for Illinois (17.8%).<sup>65</sup>

### **Youth**

Early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence are three recognized stages of child development that can provide the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional foundation for lifelong health, learning and well-being. Child development influences school readiness, affects academic achievement, and, ultimately, later success in life.<sup>66</sup> Children, adolescents, and young adults under age 25 years make up about 25% of the population in Lansing<sup>67</sup>.

Some of the main health issues affecting children and adolescents, primarily high school age youth are described below. Where possible, findings from the 2010 Suburban Cook County Youth Risk Behavior Survey for suburban Cook County are provided.

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<sup>62</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). *Preventing Chronic Disease and Reducing Health Risk Factors*. Retrieved from

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/overview/diseasesandrisk.htm>

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Cook County Department of Public Health. (2011). *WePLAN 2015: Suburban Cook County community health assessment and plan*. Retrieved from <http://cookcountypublichealth.org/files/pdf/weplan-2015.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Cook County Department of Public Health. (2010). *Suburban Cook County Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey*. Retrieved from <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports#RiskFactors>

<sup>66</sup> Halfon N. (2009). Life course health development: A new approach for addressing upstream determinants of health and spending. Washington: Expert Voices, National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation. In *Healthy People 2020*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=10>

<sup>67</sup> Cook County Department of Public Health. *Community profile: Lansing in Cook County, Illinois 2006-2008*. Retrieved from <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/files/pdf/data-and-reports/community-profiles-06-08/south-district-0608r.pdf>

## Overweight and Obesity

Obesity has increased among young people over the last few decades. Nationally, 1 in 8 preschoolers are obese. Research indicates these overweight young children are five times more likely than their non-obese peers to become overweight or obese as they age<sup>68</sup>. Today, in suburban Cook County, about one in three kindergartners (33%) and four out of 10 (40%) of children in 9<sup>th</sup> grade are overweight or obese --- both of which are higher than national averages for children in similar age groups<sup>69</sup>.

Eating well and being physically active are important behaviors for maintaining a healthy weight. While generally comparable to state and national rates, results of the 2010 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBS) for suburban Cook County found the following:

- Only 1 in 5 youth ate 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day weekly
- 1 in 4 youth drank soda pop at least once per day
- 1 in 6 youth did not meet the daily recommended minutes of physical activity

The importance of regular physical activity in young children cannot be overemphasized. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) affirms the importance of physical activity for preschoolers. In addition to fostering healthy habits through early exposure to physical activity, healthy physical development during this stage of life is key to learning more complex motor skills as children age<sup>70</sup>.

## Sexual Health

The World Health Organization defines sexual health as a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.<sup>71</sup>

As teens go through puberty, they become sexually mature. The results from the 2010 suburban Cook County Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBS), which is part of a nationwide survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found that nearly 4 in 10 high school students (37%) have had sexual intercourse; among 12<sup>th</sup> graders the rate was highest (60%). Of those who had sexual intercourse in the past three months, only 6 in 10 students

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<sup>68</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). Progress on childhood obesity. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/childhoodobesity/>

<sup>69</sup> Cook County Department of Public Health and Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children. (2013). *2010–2012 overweight and obesity prevalence among school-aged children in Suburban Cook County, Illinois*. Retrieved from <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports>

<sup>70</sup> Pica, R. (2011). *Why preschoolers need physical education*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved from [http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/201103/Leaps&Bounds\\_Online0311.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/201103/Leaps&Bounds_Online0311.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Sexual health*. Retrieved from [http://www.who.int/topics/sexual\\_health/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/sexual_health/en/)

(62.1%) reported having used a condom. Additionally, 1 in 5 students (19.3%) indicated using drugs or alcohol before engaging in sexual intercourse.

Youth engaging in sexual intercourse are at risk for both teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The teen birth rate in Lansing has remained constant at about 6% (6.6% in 2006-2008) and is slightly lower than the rate for suburban Cook County (7.7% in 2006-2008). Additionally, youth are especially vulnerable to STIs, which can lead to serious long-term health consequences like infertility when not treated. In suburban Cook County, 60% or 3 out of 5 cases of STIs reported to CCDPH between 2006 and 2008 were among youth and young adults aged 15-24 years<sup>72</sup>. Among the most common STIs seen are Chlamydia and gonorrhea. Rates of new cases of Chlamydia and gonorrhea in Lansing have more than doubled between the period 2000-2002 and 2006-2008. Chlamydia infections rose from 152.9 per 100,000 population to 354.1 per 100,000 population; and gonorrhea increased from 67.1 cases per 100,000 population to 142.4 cases per 100,000 population. Further these rates remain slightly higher than those all of suburban Cook County in 2006-2008 (310.6 per 100,000 population and 102.8 per 100,000 population, respectively).<sup>73</sup>

#### Mental health

Teenage years can be challenging with stresses such as being accepted and doing well in school. While worrying about these pressures is normal for youth, feeling very sad or hopeless is concerning. In suburban Cook County, 1 in 4 high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless for almost every day in a two or more weeks period such that it caused them to stop doing some usual activities, and nearly 1 in 10 youth attempted suicide in the past 12 months.

#### Substance Use, Including Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs

Adolescents and young adults in their 20s are at the highest risk for illicit drug use, posing a threat to their health and well-being. Since addiction is a developmental disease, the likelihood of casual use leading to abuse and addiction increases the earlier an adolescent begins use<sup>74</sup>. According to the findings of 2010 suburban Cook County YRBS among high school students:

#### Tobacco Use

- 4 in 10 students have tried cigarette smoking
- 1 in 10 students smoked a whole cigarette for the first time between the ages of 13 and 14 years
- 1 in 10 students smoked cigarettes on one or more days in the past 30 days

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<sup>72</sup> Cook County Department of Public Health. (2010). *Sexually transmitted infections surveillance report, 2006-2008*. Retrieved from <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/files/pdf/STIReport20062008Final.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Cook County Department of Public Health. Community profile: Lansing in Cook County, Illinois 2006-2008. Retrieved from <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/files/pdf/data-and-reports/community-profiles-06-08/south-district-0608r.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> Johnston, LD et al. (2012). *Monitoring the future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2011: Volume I, Secondary school students*. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan. In SOPHE National Health Education Week, Adolescent Health: Planting Seeds for a Healthier Generation, October 15-19, 2012. Retrieved from [http://www.sophe.org/Sophe/PDF/Alcohol\\_Tobacco\\_and\\_Other\\_Drug\\_Use1.pdf](http://www.sophe.org/Sophe/PDF/Alcohol_Tobacco_and_Other_Drug_Use1.pdf)

### *Alcohol Use*

- Nearly 1 in 5 students had their first drink of alcohol before age 13 years
- Nearly 1 in 3 students drank alcohol during the past 30 days
- Nearly 2 in 10 students had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours on one or more times in the past 30 days

### *Other Drug Use*

- Nearly 1 in 5 students used marijuana during the past 30 days
- 1 in 10 students have taken a prescription drug (such as OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, codeine, Adderall, Ritalin, or Xanax) without a doctor's prescription one or more times during their life

### *Unintentional Injuries and Violence*

Unintentional injury (e.g., accidents in road traffic, falls, drowning, etc.) is one of the leading causes of death for children and young people under 25 years of age. Young people are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors (i.e., behaviors associated with a risk of physical harm). For example, the results from the YRBS indicate:

- About 1 in 4 students rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol one or more times in a car or other vehicle during in the past 30 days
- 1 in 4 texted or e-mailed while driving a vehicle in the past 30 days
- 1 in 3 students were in a physical fight at least once in the prior 12 months

Additionally, bullying, which is unwanted, aggressive, and often repeated behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance<sup>75</sup>, has been linked to violent behavior, overweight/obesity, mental health concerns, and substance abuse<sup>76,77,78</sup>. Nearly 1 in 7 students report having been bullied on school property or bullied electronically.

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<sup>75</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Bullying definition*. Retrieved from <http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/>

<sup>76</sup> Lurie Children's Research Center. Child Health Data Lab. (2013). *Bullying and Body Weight*. Retrieved from [http://www.luriechildrensresearch.org/uploadedFiles/Research/Smith\\_Child\\_Health\\_Research/Child\\_Health\\_Data\\_Lab\\_\(CHDL\)/2013%20YRBS%20bullying%20bmi.pdf](http://www.luriechildrensresearch.org/uploadedFiles/Research/Smith_Child_Health_Research/Child_Health_Data_Lab_(CHDL)/2013%20YRBS%20bullying%20bmi.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> Eisenberg, M. & Aalsma, M. (2005). *Bullying and peer victimization: Position paper for the Society of Adolescent Medicine*. Journal of Adolescent Health, 36, 88-91. Retrieved from [http://sahmtest.sherwood-group.com/SAHM\\_Main/media/Advocacy/Positions/Jan-05-Bullying\\_and\\_Peer\\_Victimization.pdf](http://sahmtest.sherwood-group.com/SAHM_Main/media/Advocacy/Positions/Jan-05-Bullying_and_Peer_Victimization.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.) *Effects of bullying*. Retrieved from <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/effects/>

# The Lan-Oak Park District and the Promotion of Health & Wellness

The Lan-Oak Park District has policies, programs, community events, and facilities that can or do promote health, highlighted below.

**Table B.1: Promotion of Health and Wellness**

Health and Wellness Area	Potential Benefits	Lan-Oak Park District Facilities, Policies, Programs, Events	Brief Description of Park District Activities
<b>Active Living/ Physical Activity</b>	Physical and mental health benefits for youth and adults	Eisenhower Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The District lowered the age for the fitness center to 10 years.</li> <li>- The District is a Silver Sneakers Agency.</li> <li>- The District works with Healthways that includes almost 150 senior participants.</li> <li>- The Healthways Prime Fitness Program covers membership costs under health insurance plans.</li> <li>- Fitness programs always fill up according to the LOPD.</li> <li>- Kid fitness classes began in 2006.</li> <li>- Offer teens a summer boot camp</li> </ul>
<b>Child/Youth Development</b>	Cultivates leadership and life skills (e.g., decision-making skills; cooperative behaviors; positive relationships and empowerment); builds self-esteem and – confidence and impacts academic achievement, which help deter or prevent youth from engaging in harmful behaviors	Pre-school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The District provides early childhood education via its pre-school program.</li> </ul>
		Skate Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Located at Bock Park</li> </ul>
		Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer programs like college cooking and interviewing skills</li> </ul>
		Volunteer Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Piloted having a teen serve as a Volunteer Camp Counselor, and are planning to expand on this.</li> <li>- Periodically call on youth (11 years and up) to volunteer at events like the annual Halloween event</li> </ul>
<b>Community/Social Connection</b>	Promotes family bonding and/or supports older adults and/or people with disabilities in continuing to lead independent, happier lives	Eisenhower Center / Community Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizes five events for the community throughout the year</li> </ul>
		Park Rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individuals/families are able</li> </ul>

			to secure park shelter/picnic areas.
		Activities for Seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sponsors a Senior Bingo twice a week (M and F); 10 – 30 people.</li> <li>- Thorton Township also uses the Eisenhower Community Center to offer senior lunches – once a week; approximately 50-70 seniors participate.</li> </ul>
		People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contracts with a special recreation association to provide programs/services for children with disabilities.</li> <li>- Promotes active living.</li> </ul>
<b>Healthy Eating/ Nutrition</b>		Vending Machines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are a total of six vending machines all of which are located in the Eisenhower Community Center.</li> </ul>
		Special Events/Concession Stands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daddy Daughter Dinner Dance – cater it in; have healthy options even with items like fried chicken</li> <li>- Farmer’s Market</li> </ul>
<b>Infection Control</b>	Minimizes/controls spread of infectious diseases	Encourages hand washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Included in parent manuals; signage in hallways and in classrooms</li> </ul>
<b>Tobacco Prevention</b>	Limits exposure to secondhand smoke, which is widely known to be harmful; supports prevention of youth tobacco initiation; reduces litter	Smoke-Free Workplace Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The purpose is to provide a smoke-free environment for all employees and visitors.</li> <li>- Specifies designated areas will be located at least 15 feet from any entrance and air in-take vents of buildings owned and operated by Park District.</li> <li>- No smoking is allowed in any Park District vehicle.</li> <li>- Promotion of this policy and support for employees to quit.</li> </ul>
<b>Violence Prevention</b>	Cultivates a safe and welcoming environment; promotes emotional health and well-being; can support positive youth development, depending on definition and approach to violence prevention	Zero-Tolerance Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The purpose is to indicate that all acts or threats of violence by program participants will be taken seriously and the Park District will promptly respond to any incident or suggestion of violence.</li> </ul>
<b>Worksite Wellness</b>	Linked with improved employee morale; reduced turnover and absenteeism; health care cost containment; and	Pass Policy for Full-time and Part-time Employees; Fitness Pass Policy for Village of Lansing and Certified School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full-time employees are eligible for a free annual membership.</li> <li>- Part-time employees are eligible to purchase an</li> </ul>

	improved employee health status	Teachers	<p>annual Fitness Center pass at a discount schedule based on number of years employed. Initiation fee is waived.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Village of Lansing employees and certified teachers teaching in Lansing, with proof of employment, are entitled to a \$25.00 discount on an annual membership.</li> </ul>
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